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**A BOOK OF
SHORT PLAYS**

A BOOK OF SHORT PLAYS

VOLUME II

XVIII—XX
CENTURIES

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PREFACE

IN this volume of Short Plays the English Association is making in part a new venture. Its previous publications, such as *Poems of To-day*, *Prose of To-day*, and the companion volumes, have been anthologies of contemporary work in various literary fields. It has been thought desirable for the Association to include in this series a selection of short dramatic pieces. But as there are already in existence numerous collections of present-day plays, it was decided in this case to widen the scope and range of the volume.

Approximately the first half of its contents have been chosen to illustrate aspects of the development of English drama through the centuries, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth. The medieval religious play is represented by the Brome *Abraham and Isaac*, which is less accessible than the same episode in the great Miracle Cycles. Of the allegorical Morality a more familiar example is given in *Everyman*, whose attraction both for readers and theatre-goers has been well proved. Both in *Everyman* and in John Heywood's genial Interlude *The Play of the Wether*, representing the early Tudor stage, some abridgement has been necessary.

Then follow two strongly contrasted specimens of early Stuart drama: the contemporary domestic play in the grim form of *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, and the graceful entertainment for a learned society in William Browne's *Inner Temple Masque*.

Thence we pass to eighteenth-century farce in Sheridan's *St. Patrick's Day*, less familiar than his classic

comedies. The Victorian poetic play has a pleasant example in Tennyson's *The Falcon*.

The remaining six pieces in the collection illustrate different aspects of twentieth century drama and speak for themselves. They range from the tragic intensity of Synge's *Riders to the Sea* and the unsolved riddle of Barrie's *Shall we Join the Ladies?* to specimens of light-hearted but technically accomplished work by well-known contemporary playwrights.

For the purposes of this volume little critical apparatus has been thought needful. But a brief introductory note precedes each play, and there is a glossary of words and phrases. In *Abraham and Isaac*, *Everyman*, and *The Play of the Wether* the original spelling has been retained; in *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and the pieces that follow it has, where necessary, been modernized.

The English Association hopes that the volume will be of interest and use to students, community players, and readers generally.

FOR permission to use copyright plays the English Association is indebted to the authors concerned, and acknowledgements are due also to the following: the Early English Text Society for *Abraham and Isaac* from the Brome MS.; the Clarendon Press and Dr. A. W. Pollard for his abridgement of *Everyman*; the Tennyson Trustees and Messrs. Macmillan & Co. for *The Falcon*; the Executors of the late J. M. Synge and Messrs. G. Allen & Unwin for *Riders to the Sea*; Messrs. William Heinemann for Mr. Maurice Baring's *Catherine Parr*, from *Diminutive Dramas*; Pinker's Play Bureau and Messrs. Jonathan Cape for Mr. Laurence Housman's *Royal Favour*; the Executors of the late Sir J. M. Barrie and Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton for *Shall we Join the Ladies?*; Mr. A. D. Peters for Mr. Clifford Bax's *Silly Willy*; Messrs. Pearn, Pollinger & Higham and Messrs. Jonathan Cape for Mrs. Naomi Mitchison's *Nix-Nought-Nothing*.

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RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

St. Patrick's Day: OR, *The Scheming Lieutenant* A FARCE

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN: 1751-1816. Educated at Harrow. By the time that he was twenty-five had written *The Rivals*, *St. Patrick's Day* or *The Scheming Lieutenant*, and *The Duenna*. As manager and part-proprietor of Drury Lane Theatre, in succession to Garrick, he wrote and produced *A Trip to Scarborough*, *The School for Scandal*, and *The Critic*; also, less happily, the tragedy of *Pizarro*—in which it will be remembered that Thackeray made Miss Fotheringay appear (*Pendennis*, Chapter XIV). Returned to Parliament in 1780 as a supporter of Fox, Sheridan abandoned literature for politics. Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the Rockingham administration, Secretary to the Treasury in the coalition that followed, and Treasurer of the Navy in the 'Ministry of all the Talents', he became one of the outstanding orators of the day. Macaulay has done justice to his handling of the case against Warren Hastings in 1788. In 1813 Sheridan, always a spendthrift, was arrested for debt, and the remaining three years of his life were clouded by ill health and anxiety. He received, however, a pompous public funeral attended by two of the Royal Dukes. Though not to be ranked with his best comedies, *St. Patrick's Day* is a good example of the bustling farce of the period. Near the end the influence of Molière is obvious, but in the *Scheming Lieutenant* himself there are some traits both of Captain Absolute and Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR.	CORPORAL FLINT.
DOCTOR ROSY.	LAURETTA.
JUSTICE CREDULOUS.	MRS. BRIDGET CREDULOUS.
SERGEANT TROUNCE.	- Drummer, Soldiers, Countrymen, and Servant.

SCENE. *A Town in England.*

ACT I

SCENE I. LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR'S Lodgings.

Enter SERJEANT TROUNCE, CORPORAL FLINT, *and four*
Soldiers.

1ST SOLDIER. I say you are wrong; we should all speak together, each for himself, and all at once, that we may be heard the better.

2ND SOLDIER. Right, Jack, we'll argue in platoons.

3RD SOLDIER. Ay, ay, let him have our grievances in a volley, and if we be to have a spokesman, there's the corporal is the lieutenant's countryman, and knows his humour.

FLINT. Let me alone for that. I served three years, within a bit, under his honour, in the Royal Inniskil-
lions, and I never will see a sweeter tempered gentle-
man, nor one more free with his purse. I put a great
shammock in his hat this morning, and I'll be bound
for him he'll wear it, was it as big as Steven's Green.

4TH SOLDIER. I say again then you talk like youngsters, like militia striplings: there's a discipline, look'ee, in all things, whereof the serjeant must be our guide; he's a gentleman of words; he understands your foreign lingo, your figures, and such like auxiliaries in scoring. Confess now for a reckoning, whether in chalk or
writing, ben't he your only man?

FLINT. Why the serjeant is a scholar to be sure, and has the gift of reading.

TROUNCE. Good soldiers, and fellow gentlemen, if you

make me your spokesman, you will show the more judgment; and let me alone for the argument. I'll be as loud as a drum, and point blank from the purpose.

ALL. Agreed, agreed.

FLINT. Oh, fait! here comes the lieutenant.—Now, serjeant. 30

TROUNCE. So then, to order.—Put on your mutiny looks; every man grumble a little to himself, and some of you hum the Deserter's March.

Enter LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR.

O'CONNOR. Well, honest lads, what is it you have to complain of?

SOLDIERS. Ahem! hem!

TROUNCE. So please your honour, the very grievance of the matter is this:—ever since your honour differed with Justice Credulous, our inn keepers use us most scurvily. By my halbert, their treatment is such, that 40 if your spirit was willing to put up with it, flesh and blood could by no means agree; so we humbly petition that your honour would make an end of the matter at once, by running away with the justice's daughter, or else get us fresh quarters,—hem! hem!

O'CONNOR. Indeed! Pray which of the houses use you ill?

1ST SOLDIER. There's the Red Lion an't half the civility of the old Red Lion.

2ND SOLDIER. There's the White Horse, if he wasn't 50 casehardened, ought to be ashamed to show his face.

O'CONNOR. Very well; the Horse and the Lion shall answer for it at the quarter sessions.

TROUNCE. The two Magpies are civil enough; but the Angel uses us like devils, and the Rising Sun refuses us light to go to bed by.

O'CONNOR. Then, upon my word, I'll have the Rising Sun put down, and the Angel shall give security for his good behaviour; but are you sure you do nothing to quit scores with them? 60

FLINT. Nothing at all, your honour, unless now and then we happen to fling a cartridge into the kitchen fire, or put a spatterdash or so into the soup; and sometimes Ned drums up and down stairs a little of a night.

O'CONNOR. Oh, all that's fair; but hark'ee lads, I must have no grumbling on St. Patrick's day; so here, take this, and divide it amongst you. But observe me now, —show yourselves men of spirit, and don't spend sixpence of it in drink.

TROUNCE. Nay, hang it, your honour, soldiers should 70 never bear malice; we must drink St. Patrick's and your honour's health.

ALL. Oh, damn malice! St. Patrick's and his honour's by all means.

FLINT. Come away, then, lads, and first we'll parade round the Market-cross, for the honour of King George.

1ST SOLDIER. Thank your honour.—Come along; St. Patrick, his honour, and strong beer for ever!

[*Exeunt Soldiers.*]

O'CONNOR. Get along, you thoughtless vagabonds! yet, 80 upon my conscience, 'tis very hard these poor fellows should scarcely have bread from the soil they would die to defend.

ROSY. True, true, my friend; grief can't mend the matter
—all's for the best; but such a woman was a great loss,
lieutenant.

O'CONNOR. To be sure, for doubtless she had mental
accomplishments equal to her beauty.

ROSY. Mental accomplishments! she would have stuffed
an alligator, or pickled a lizard, with any apothecary's
wife in the kingdom. Why, she could decipher a pre- 150
scription, and invent the ingredients, almost as well as
myself: then she was such a hand at making foreign
waters!—for Seltzer, Pyrmont, Islington, or Chaly-
beate, she never had her equal; and her Bath and
Bristol springs exceeded the originals.—Ah, poor Dolly!
she fell a martyr to her own discoveries.

O'CONNOR. How so, pray?

ROSY. Poor soul! her illness was occasioned by her zeal
in trying an improvement on the Spa-water, by an 160
infusion of rum and acid.

O'CONNOR. Ay, ay, spirits never agree with water-
drinkers.

ROSY. No, no, you mistake. Rum agreed with her well
enough; it was not the rum that killed the poor dear
creature, for she died of a dropsy. Well, she is gone
never to return, and has left no pledge of our loves
behind. No little babe, to hang like a label round
papa's neck. Well, well, we are all mortal—sooner or
later—flesh is grass—flowers fade. 170

O'CONNOR. Oh, the devil!—again! [Aside.

ROSY. Life's a shadow—the world a stage—we strut an
hour.

O'CONNOR. Here, doctor. [Offers snuff.

ROSY. True, true, my friend: well, high grief can't cure it. All's for the best, hey! my little Alexander.

O'CONNOR. Right, right; an apothecary should never be out of spirits. But come, faith, 'tis time honest Humphrey should wait on the justice; that must be our first scheme.

180

ROSY. True, true; you should be ready: the clothes are at my house, and I have given you such a character that he is impatient to have you: he swears you shall be his bodyguard. Well, I honour the army, or I should never do so much to serve you.

O'CONNOR. Indeed I am bound to you for ever, doctor; and when once I'm possessed of my dear Lauretta, I will endeavour to make work for you as fast as possible.

ROSY. Now you put me in mind of my poor wife again.

O'CONNOR. Ah, pray forget her a little: we shall be too late.

ROSY. Poor Dolly!

O'CONNOR. 'Tis past twelve.

ROSY. Inhuman dropsy!

O'CONNOR. The justice will wait.

ROSY. Cropped in her prime!

O'CONNOR. For Heaven's sake, come!

ROSY. Well, flesh is grass.

O'CONNOR. O, the devil!

ROSY. We must all die——

200

O'CONNOR. Doctor!

ROSY. Kings, lords, and common whores——

[*Exeunt* LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR *forcing* ROSY *off*.]

SCENE II. *A Room in JUSTICE CREDULOUS' House.*

Enter LAURETTA and MRS. BRIDGET CREDULOUS.

LAURETTA. I repeat it again, mamma, officers are the prettiest men in the world, and Lieutenant O'Connor is the prettiest officer I ever saw.

MRS. BRIDGET. For shame, Laura! how can you talk so?—or if you must have a military man, there's Lieutenant Plow, or Captain Haycock, or Major Dray, the brewer, are all your admirers; and though they are peaceable, good kind of men, they have as large cock-ades, and become scarlet as well as the fighting folks. 210

LAURETTA. Psha! you know, mamma, I hate militia officers; a set of dunghill cocks with spurs on—heroes scratched off a church door—clowns in military masquerade, wearing the dress without supporting the character. No, give me the bold upright youth, who makes love to-day, and has his head shot off to-morrow. Dear! to think how the sweet fellows sleep on the ground, and fight in silk stockings and lace ruffles.

MRS. BRIDGET. Oh, barbarous! to want a husband that may wed you to-day, and be sent the Lord knows where before night; then in a twelvemonth perhaps to have him come like a Colossus, with one leg at New York and the other at Chelsea Hospital. 220

LAURETTA. Then I'll be his crutch, mamma.

MRS. BRIDGET. No, give me a husband that knows where his limbs are, though he want the use of them:—and if he should take you with him, to sleep in a baggage-cart, and stroll about the camp like a gipsy, with a knapsack and two children at your back;—then, by 230

way of entertainment in the evening, to make a party with the serjeant's wife to drink bohea tea, and play at all-fours on a drumhead:—'tis a precious life, to be sure!

LAURETTA. Nay, mamma, you shouldn't be against my lieutenant, for I heard him say you were the best natured and best looking woman in the world.

MRS. BRIDGET. Why, child, I never said but that Lieutenant O'Connor was a very well-bred and discerning young man; 'tis your papa is so violent against him. 240

LAURETTA. Why, Cousin Sophy married an officer.

MRS. BRIDGET. Ay, Laury, an officer in the militia.

LAURETTA. No, indeed, mamma, a marching regiment.

MRS. BRIDGET. No, child, I tell you he was major of militia.

LAURETTA. Indeed, mamma, it wasn't.

Enter JUSTICE CREDULOUS.

JUSTICE. Bridget, my love. I have had a message.

LAURETTA. It was Cousin Sophy told me so.

JUSTICE. I have had a message, love——

MRS. BRIDGET. No, child, she would say no such thing. 250

JUSTICE. A message, I say.

LAURETTA. How could he be in the militia, when he was ordered abroad?

MRS. BRIDGET. Ay, girl, hold your tongue!—Well, my dear.

JUSTICE. I have had a message from Doctor Rosy.

MRS. BRIDGET. He ordered abroad! He went abroad for his health.

JUSTICE. Why, Bridget!—

MRS. BRIDGET. Well, deary.—Now, hold your tongue, ²⁶⁰
miss.

JUSTICE. A message from Dr. Rosy, and Doctor Rosy
says——

LAURETTA. I'm sure, mamma, his regimentals——

JUSTICE. Damn his regimentals!—Why don't you listen?

MRS. BRIDGET. Ay, girl, how durst you interrupt your
papa?

LAURETTA. Well, papa.

JUSTICE. Doctor Rosy says he'll bring——

LAURETTA. Were blue turned up with red, mamma. ²⁷⁰

JUSTICE. Laury!—says he will bring the young man——

MRS. BRIDGET. Red! yellow, if you please, miss.

JUSTICE. Bridget!—the young man that is to be
hired——

MRS. BRIDGET. Besides, miss, it is very unbecoming in
you to want to have the last word with your mamma;
you should know——

JUSTICE. Why, zounds! will you hear me or no?

MRS. BRIDGET. I am listening, my love—I am listening!
—But what signifies my silence, what good is my not ²⁸⁰
speaking a word, if this girl will interrupt and let
nobody speak but herself?—Ay, I don't wonder, my
life, at your impatience; your poor dear lips quiver to
speak; but I suppose she'll run on, and not let you put
in a word.—You may very well be angry; there is
nothing, sure, so provoking as a chattering, talking——

LAURETTA. Nay, I'm sure, mamma, it is you will not
let papa speak now.

MRS. BRIDGET. Why, you little provoking minx——

JUSTICE. Get out of the room directly, both of you—get 290
out!

MRS. BRIDGET. Ay, go, girl.

JUSTICE. Go, Bridget, you are worse than she, you old
hag. I wish you were both up to the neck in the canal,
to argue there till I took you out.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Doctor Rosy, sir.

JUSTICE. Show him up. *[Exit Servant.*

LAURETTA. Then you own, mamma, it was a marching
regiment?

MRS. BRIDGET. You're an obstinate fool, I tell you; for 300
if that had been the case——

JUSTICE. You won't go?

MRS. BRIDGET. We are going, Mr. Surly.—If that had
been the case, I say, how could——

LAURETTA. Nay, mamma, one proof——

MRS. BRIDGET. How could Major——

LAURETTA. And a full proof——

[JUSTICE CREDULOUS drives them off.

JUSTICE. There they go, ding dong in for the day. Good
lack! a fluent tongue is the only thing a mother don't
like her daughter to resemble her in. 310

Enter DOCTOR ROSY.

Well, doctor, where's the lad—where's Trusty?

ROSY. At hand; he'll be here in a minute, I'll answer
for 't. He's such a one as you an't met with,—brave
as a lion, gentle as a saline draught.

JUSTICE. Ah, he comes in the place of a rogue, a dog that was corrupted by the lieutenant. But this is a sturdy fellow, is he, doctor?

ROSY. As Hercules; and the best back-sword in the country. Egad, he'll make the red-coats keep their distance.

320

JUSTICE. O the villains! this is St. Patrick's day, and those rascals have been parading my house all the morning. I know they have a design upon me; but I have taken all precautions: I have magazines of arms, and if this fellow does but prove faithful, I shall be more at ease.

ROSY. Doubtless he'll be a comfort to you.

Re-enter Servant.

SERVANT. There is a man below, sir, inquires for Doctor Rosy.

ROSY. Show him up.

JUSTICE. Hold! a little caution—How does he look? 330

SERVANT. A country-looking fellow, your worship.

JUSTICE. Oh, well, well, for Doctor Rosy; these rascals try all ways to get in here.

SERVANT. Yes, please your worship; there was one here this morning wanted to speak to you: he said his name was Corporal Breakbones.

JUSTICE. Corporal Breakbones!

SERVANT. And drummer Crackskull came again.

JUSTICE. Ay! did you ever hear of such a damned confounded crew? Well, show the lad in here! 340

[Exit Servant.]

ROSY. Ay, he'll be your porter; he'll give the rogues an answer.

Enter LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR, *disguised*.

JUSTICE. So, a tall—Efacks! what! has lost an eye?

ROSY. Only a bruise he got in taking seven or eight highwaymen.

JUSTICE. He has a damned wicked leer somehow with the other.

ROSY. Oh, no, he's bashful—a sheepish look——

JUSTICE. Well, my lad, what's your name?

O'CONNOR. Humphrey Hum.

350

JUSTICE. Hum—I don't like Hum!

O'CONNOR. But I be mostly called honest Humphrey——

ROSY. There, I told you so, of noted honesty.

JUSTICE. Well, honest Humphrey, the doctor has told you my terms, and you are willing to serve, hey?

O'CONNOR. And please your worship I shall be well content.

JUSTICE. Well, then, hark'ye, honest Humphrey,—you are sure now you will never be a rogue—never take a 360 bribe, hey, honest Humphrey?

O'CONNOR. A bribe! What's that?

JUSTICE. A very ignorant fellow indeed!

ROSY. His worship hopes you will never part with your honesty for money.

O'CONNOR. Noa, noa.

JUSTICE. Well said, Humphrey—my chief business with you is to watch the motions of a rake-helly fellow here, one Lieutenant O'Connor.

ROSY. Ay, you don't value the soldiers, do you, 370
Humphrey?

O'CONNOR. Not I; they are but zwaggerers, and you'll
see they'll be as much afraid of me as they would of
their captain.

JUSTICE. And i'faith, Humphrey, you have a pretty
cudgel there!

O'CONNOR. Ay, the zwitch is better than nothing, but
I should be glad of a stouter: ha' you got such a thing
in the house as an old coach-pole, or a spare bed-post?

JUSTICE. Oons! what a dragon it is!—Well, Humphrey, 380
come with me.—I'll just show him to Bridget, doctor,
and we'll agree.—Come along, honest Humphrey.

[*Exit.*]

O'CONNOR. My dear doctor, now remember to bring
the justice presently to the walk: I have a scheme to
get into his confidence at once.

ROSY. I will, I will.

[*They shake hands.*]

Re-enter JUSTICE CREDULOUS.

JUSTICE. Why, honest Humphrey, hey! what the devil
are you at?

ROSY. I was just giving him a little advice.—Well, I
must go for the present.—Good morning to your wor- 390
ship—you need not fear the lieutenant: while he is in
your house.

JUSTICE. Well, get in, Humphrey. Good morning to
you, doctor.—[*Exit* DOCTOR ROSY.] Come along, Hum-
phrey.—Now I think I am a match for the lieutenant
and all his gang.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

SCENE I. *A Street.*

Enter SERJEANT TROUNCE, Drummer, *and* Soldiers.

TROUNCE. Come, silence your drum—there is no valour stirring to-day. I thought St. Patrick would have given us a recruit or two to-day.

SOLDIERS. Mark, serjeant!

400

Enter two Countrymen.

TROUNCE. Oh! these are the lads I was looking for; they have the looks of gentlemen.—A'n't you single, my lads?

1ST COUNTRYMAN. Yes, an please you, I be quite single: my relations be all dead, thank heavens, more or less. I have but one poor mother left in the world, and she's an helpless woman.

TROUNCE. Indeed! a very extraordinary case—quite your own master then—the fitter to serve his Majesty. —Can you read?

410

1ST COUNTRYMAN. Noa, I was always too lively to take to learning; but John here is main clever at it.

TROUNCE. So, what you're a scholar, friend?

2ND COUNTRYMAN. I was born so, measter. Feyther kept grammar-school.

TROUNCE. Lucky man—in a campaign or two put yourself down chaplain to the regiment. And I warrant you have read of warriors and heroes?

2ND COUNTRYMAN. Yes, that I have: I have read of Jack the Giant-killer, and the Dragon of Waul /, and 420

the—Noa, I believe that's all in the hero way, except once about a comet.

TROUNCE. Wonderful knowledge!—Well, my heroes, I'll write word to the king of your good intentions, and meet me half an hour hence at the Two Magpies.

COUNTRYMEN. We will, your honour, we will.

TROUNCE. But stay; for fear I shouldn't see you again in the crowd, clap these little bits of ribbon into your hats.

1ST COUNTRYMAN. Our hats are none of the best. 430

TROUNCE. Well, meet me at the Magpies, and I'll give you money to buy new ones.

COUNTRYMEN. Bless your honour, thank your honour. *[Exeunt.]*

TROUNCE. *[Winking at Soldiers.]* Jack! *[Exeunt Soldiers.]*

Enter LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR.

So, here comes one would make a grenadier—Stop, friend, will you list?

O'CONNOR. Who shall I serve under?

TROUNCE. Under me, to be sure.

O'CONNOR. Isn't Lieutenant O'Connor your officer?

TROUNCE. He is, and I am commander over him. 440

O'CONNOR. What! be your serjeants greater than your captains?

TROUNCE. To be sure we are; 'tis our business to keep them in order. For instance now, the general writes to me, dear Serjeant, or dear Trounce, or dear Serjeant Trounce, according to his hurry, if your lieu-

tenant does not demean himself accordingly, let me know.—Yours, General Deluge.

O'CONNOR. And do you complain of him often?

TROUNCE. No, hang him, the lad is good-natured at 450
bottom, so I pass over small things. But hark'ee,
between ourselves, he is most confoundedly given to
wenching.

Enter CORPORAL FLINT.

FLINT. Please your honour, the doctor is coming this
way with his worship—We are all ready, and have our
cues. *[Exit.*

O'CONNOR. Then, my dear Trounce, or my dear Ser-
jeant, or my dear Serjeant Trounce, take yourself
away.

TROUNCE. Zounds! the lieutenant—I smell of the black 460
hole already. *[Exit.*

Enter JUSTICE CREDULOUS and DOCTOR ROSY.

JUSTICE. I thought I saw some of the cut-throats.

ROSY. I fancy not; there's no one but honest Humphrey.
Ha! Odds life, here come some of them—we'll stay by
these trees, and let them pass.

JUSTICE. Oh, the bloody-looking dogs!

[Walks aside with DOCTOR ROSY.

Re-enter CORPORAL FLINT and two Soldiers.

FLINT. Halloa, friend! do you serve Justice Credulous?

O'CONNOR. I do.

FLINT. Are you rich?

O'CONNOR. Noa.

FLINT. Nor ever will be with that old stingy booby.
Look here—take it. *[Gives him a purse.]*

O'CONNOR. What must I do for this?

FLINT. Mark me, our lieutenant is in love with the old
rogue's daughter: help us to break his worship's bones,
and carry off the girl, and you are a made man.

O'CONNOR. I'll see you hanged first, you pack of skurry
villains! *[Throws away the purse.]*

FLINT. What, sirrah, do you mutiny? Lay hold of him.

O'CONNOR. Nay then, I'll try your armour for you. 480
[Beats them.]

ALL. Oh! oh!—quarter! quarter!
[Exeunt CORPORAL FLINT and Soldiers.]

JUSTICE. *[Coming forward.]* Trim them, trounce them,
break their bones, honest Humphrey—What a spirit
he has!

ROSY. Aquafortis.

O'CONNOR. Betray your master!

ROSY. What a miracle of fidelity!

JUSTICE. Ay, and it shall not go unrewarded—I'll give
him sixpence on the spot. Here, honest Humphrey,
there's for yourself: as for this bribe, *[takes up the purse]* 490
such trash is best in the hands of justice. Now then,
doctor, I think I may trust him to guard the women:
while he is with them I may go out with safety.

ROSY. Doubtless you may—I'll answer for the lieu-
tenant's behaviour whilst honest Humphrey is with
your daughter.

JUSTICE. Ay, ay, she shall go nowhere without him.
Come along, honest Humphrey. How rare it is to
meet with such a servant! *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE II. *A Garden.*

LAURETTA *discovered.* Enter JUSTICE CREDULOUS and
LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR.

JUSTICE. Why, you little truant, how durst you wander 500
so far from the house without my leave? Do you want
to invite that scoundrel lieutenant to scale the walls
and carry you off?

LAURETTA. Lud, papa, you are so apprehensive for
nothing.

JUSTICE. Why, hussy——

LAURETTA. Well then, I can't bear to be shut up all day
so like a nun. I am sure it is enough to make one wish
to be run away with—and I wish I was run away with
—I do—and I wish the lieutenant knew it. 510

JUSTICE. You do, do you, hussy? Well, I think I'll take
pretty good care of you. Here, Humphrey, I leave
this lady in your care. Now you may walk about the
garden, Miss Pert; but Humphrey shall go with you
wherever you go. So mind, honest Humphrey, I am
obliged to go abroad for a little while; let no one but
yourself come near her; don't be shamefaced, you
booby, but keep close to her. And now, miss, let your
lieutenant or any of his crew come near you if they can.
[Exit.

LAURETTA. How this booby stares after him! 520
[Sits down and sings.

O'CONNOR. Lauretta!

LAURETTA. Not so free, fellow! [Sings.

O'CONNOR. Lauretta! look on me.

LAURETTA. Not so free, fellow!

O'CONNOR. No recollection!

LAURETTA. Honest Humphrey, be quiet.

O'CONNOR. Have you forgot your faithful soldier?

LAURETTA. Ah! Oh preserve me!

O'CONNOR. 'Tis, my soul! your truest slave, passing on
your father in this disguise. 530

LAURETTA. Well now, I declare this is charming—you
are so disguised, my dear lieutenant, and you look so
delightfully ugly. I am sure no one will find you out,
ha! ha! ha!—You know I am under your protection;
papa charged you to keep close to me.

O'CONNOR. True, my angel, and thus let me fulfil——

LAURETTA. O pray now, dear Humphrey——

O'CONNOR. Nay, 'tis but what old Mittimus com-
manded. [*Offers to kiss her.*]

Re-enter JUSTICE CREDULOUS.

JUSTICE. Laury, my—hey! what the devil's here? 540

LAURETTA. Well now, one kiss, and be quiet.

JUSTICE. Your very humble servant, honest Humphrey!
Don't let me—pray don't let me interrupt you!

LAURETTA. Lud, papa! Now that's so good-natured—
indeed there's no harm. You did not mean any rude-
ness, did you, Humphrey?

O'CONNOR. No, indeed, miss; his worship knows it is
not in me.

JUSTICE. I know that you are a lying, canting, hypo-
critical scoundrel; and if you don't take yourself out 550
of my sight——

LAURETTA. Indeed, papa, now I'll tell you how it was. I was sometime taken with a sudden giddiness, and Humphrey seeing me beginning to totter, ran to my assistance, quite frightened, poor fellow, and took me in his arms.

JUSTICE. Oh! was that all—nothing but a little giddiness hey!

O'CONNOR. That's all, indeed, your worship; for seeing miss change colour, I ran up instantly. 560

JUSTICE. Oh, 'twas very kind in you!

O'CONNOR. And luckily recovered her.

JUSTICE. And who made you a doctor, you impudent rascal, hey? Get out of my sight, I say, this instant, or by all the statutes——

LAURETTA. Oh now, papa, you frighten me, and I am giddy again!—Oh, help!

O'CONNOR. O dear lady, she'll fall!

[Takes her into his arms.]

JUSTICE. Zounds! what before my face—why then, thou miracle of impudence!—*[Lays hold of him and discovers 570 him.]*—Mercy on me, who have we here?—Murder! Robbery! Fire! Rape! Gunpowder! Soldiers! John! Susan! Bridget!

O'CONNOR. Good sir, don't be alarmed; I mean you no harm.

JUSTICE. Thieves! Robbers! Soldiers!

O'CONNOR. You know my love for your daughter——

JUSTICE. Fire! Cut-throats!

O'CONNOR. And that alone——

JUSTICE. Treason! Gunpowder!

Enter a Servant with a blunderbuss.

Now, scoundrel! let her go this instant.

LAURETTA. O papa, you'll kill me!

JUSTICE. Honest Humphrey, be advised. Ay, miss, this way, if you please.

O'CONNOR. Nay, sir, but hear me——

JUSTICE. I'll shoot.

O'CONNOR. And you'll be convinced——

JUSTICE. I'll shoot.

O'CONNOR. How injurious——

JUSTICE. I'll shoot—and so your very humble servant, 590
honest Humphrey Hum. [*Exeunt separately.*]

SCENE III. *A Walk.*

Enter DOCTOR ROSY.

ROSY. Well, I think my friend is now in a fair way of succeeding. Ah! I warrant he is full of hope and fear, doubt and anxiety; truly he has the fever of love strong upon him: faint, peevish, languishing all day, with burning, restless nights. Ah! just my case when I pined for my poor dear Dolly! when she used to have her daily colics, and her little doctor be sent for. Then would I interpret the language of her pulse—declare my own sufferings in my receipt for her—send her a pearl neck- 600
lace in a pill-box, or a cordial draught with an acrostic on the label. Well, those days are over: no happiness lasting: all is vanity—now sunshine, now cloudy—we are, as it were, king and beggar—then what avails——

Enter LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR.

O'CONNOR. O doctor! ruined and undone.

ROSY. The pride of beauty——

O'CONNOR. I am discovered, and——

ROSY. The gaudy palace——

O'CONNOR. The justice is——

ROSY. The pompous wig——

610

O'CONNOR. Is more enraged than ever.

ROSY. The gilded cane——

O'CONNOR. Why, doctor! [*Slapping him on the shoulder.*]

ROSY. Hey!

O'CONNOR. Confound your morals! I tell you I am discovered, discomfited, disappointed.

ROSY. Indeed! Good lack, good lack, to think of the instability of human affairs! Nothing certain in this world—most deceived when most confident—fools of fortune all.

620

O'CONNOR. My dear doctor, I want at present a little practical wisdom. I am resolved this instant to try the scheme we were going to put in execution last week. I have the letter ready, and only want your assistance to recover my ground.

ROSY. With all my heart—I'll warrant you I'll bear a part in it: but how the deuce were you discovered?

O'CONNOR. I'll tell you as we go; there's not a moment to be lost.

ROSY. Heaven send we succeed better!—but there's no knowing.

O'CONNOR. Very true.

ROSY. We may, and we may not.

O'CONNOR. Right.

ROSY. Time must show.

O'CONNOR. Certainly.

ROSY. We are but blind guessers.

O'CONNOR. Nothing more.

ROSY. Thick-sighted mortals.

O'CONNOR. Remarkably.

640

ROSY. Wandering in error.

O'CONNOR. Even so.

ROSY. Futurity is dark.

O'CONNOR. As a cellar.

ROSY. Men are moles.

[*Exeunt*, LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR *forcing out* ROSY.]

SCENE IV. *A Room in JUSTICE CREDULOUS' House.*

Enter JUSTICE CREDULOUS *and* MRS. BRIDGET CREDULOUS.

JUSTICE. Odds life, Bridget, you are enough to make one mad! I tell you he would have deceived a chief justice: the dog seemed as ignorant as my clerk, and talked of honesty as if he had been a churchwarden.

MRS. BRIDGET. Pho! nonsense, honesty!—what had you 650 to do, pray, with honesty? A fine business you have made of it with your Humphrey Hum; and miss, too, she must have been privy to it. Lauretta! ay, you would have her called so; but for my part I never knew any good come of giving girls these heathen christian names: if you had called her Deborah, or Tabitha, or Ruth, or Rebecca, or Joan, nothing of this had ever

happened; but I always knew Laurretta was a runaway name.

JUSTICE. Psha, you're a fool! 660

MRS. BRIDGET. No, Mr. Credulous, it is you who are a fool, and no one but such a simpleton would be so imposed on.

JUSTICE. Why, zounds, madam, how durst you talk so? If you have no respect for your husband, I should think *unus quorum* might command a little deference.

MRS. BRIDGET. Don't tell me!—Unus fiddlestick! you ought to be ashamed to show your face at the sessions: you'll be a laughing-stock to the whole bench, and a byword with all the pig-tailed lawyers and bag-wigged 670 attorneys about town.

JUSTICE. Is this language for his majesty's representative? By the statutes, it's high treason and petty treason, both at once!

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. A letter for your worship.

JUSTICE. Who brought it?

SERVANT. A soldier.

JUSTICE. Take it away and burn it.

MRS. BRIDGET. Stay!—Now you're in such a hurry—it is some canting scrawl from the lieutenant, I suppose. 680 —[*Takes the letter.*—*Exit Servant.*] Let me see:—ay, 'tis signed O'Connor.

JUSTICE. Well, come read it out.

MRS. BRIDGET. [*Reads.*] *Revenge is sweet.*

JUSTICE. It begins so, does it? I'm glad of that; I'll let the dog know I'm of his opinion.

MRS. BRIDGET. [*Reads.*] *And though disappointed of my designs upon your daughter, I have still the satisfaction of knowing I am revenged on her unnatural father; for this morning, in your chocolate, I had the pleasure to administer to you* 690 *a dose of poison.*—Mercy on us!

JUSTICE. No tricks, Bridget; come, you know it is not so; you know it is a lie.

MRS. BRIDGET. Read it yourself.

JUSTICE. [*Reads.*] *Pleasure to administer a dose of poison!*—Oh, horrible! Cut-throat villain!—Bridget!

MRS. BRIDGET. Lovee, stay, here's a postscript.—[*Reads.*] *N.B. 'Tis not in the power of medicine to save you.*

JUSTICE. Odds my life, Bridget! why don't you call for help? I've lost my voice.—My brain is giddy—I shall 700 burst, and no assistance.—John!—Laury!—John!

MRS. BRIDGET. You see, lovee, what you have brought on yourself.

Re-enter Servant.

SERVANT. Your worship!

JUSTICE. Stay, John; did you perceive any thing in my chocolate cup this morning?

SERVANT. Nothing, your worship, unless it was a little grounds.

JUSTICE. What colour were they?

SERVANT. Blackish, your worship.

710

JUSTICE. Ay, arsenic, black arsenic!—Why don't you run for Doctor Rosy, you rascal?

SERVANT. Now, sir?

MRS. BRIDGET. Oh lovee, you may be sure it is in vain:
let him run for the lawyer to witness your will, my life.

JUSTICE. Zounds! go for the doctor, you scoundrel. You
are all confederate murderers.

SERVANT. Oh, here he is, your worship. *[Exit.]*

JUSTICE. Now, Bridget, hold your tongue, and let me
see if my horrid situation be apparent. 720

Enter DOCTOR ROSY.

ROSY. I have but just called to inform—hey! bless me,
what's the matter with your worship?

JUSTICE. There, he sees it already!—Poison in my face,
in capitals! Yes, yes, I'm sure a job for the under-
takers indeed!

MRS. BRIDGET. Oh, oh! alas, doctor!

JUSTICE. Peace, Bridget!—Why doctor, my dear old
friend, do you really see any change in me?

ROSY. Change! never was man so altered: how came
these black spots on your nose? 730

JUSTICE. Spots on my nose!

ROSY. And that wild stare in your right eye!

JUSTICE. In my right eye!

ROSY. Ay, and alack, alack, how you are swelled!

JUSTICE. Swelled!

ROSY. Ay, don't you think he is, madam?

MRS. BRIDGET. Oh, 'tis in vain to conceal it!—Indeed,
lovee, you are as big again as you were this morning.

JUSTICE. Yes, I feel it now—I'm poisoned!—Doctor,
help me, for the love of justice! Give me life to see my 740
murderer hanged.

ROSY. What?

JUSTICE. I'm poisoned, I say!

ROSY. Speak out!

JUSTICE. What! can't you hear me?

ROSY. Your voice is so low and hollow, as it were, I can't hear a word you say.

JUSTICE. I'm gone then!—*Hic jacet*, many years one of his majesty's justices!

MRS. BRIDGET. Read, doctor!—Ah, lovee, the will!— 750
Consider, my life, how soon you will be dead.

JUSTICE. No, Bridget, I shall die by inches.

ROSY. I never heard such monstrous iniquity.—Oh, you are gone indeed, my friend! the mortgage of your little bit of clay is out, and the sexton has nothing to do but to close. We must all go, sooner or later—high and low—*Death's a debt; his mandamus binds all alike*—no bail, no demurrer.

JUSTICE. Silence, Doctor Croaker! will you cure me or will you not? 760

ROSY. Alas! my dear friend, it is not in my power, but I'll certainly see justice done on your murderer.

JUSTICE. I thank you, my dear friend, but I had rather see it myself.

ROSY. Ay, but if you recover, the villain will escape.

MRS. BRIDGET. Will he? then indeed it would be a pity you should recover. I am so enraged against the villain, I can't bear the thought of his escaping the halter.

JUSTICE. That's very kind in you, my dear; but if it's the same thing to you, my dear, I had as soon recover, 770
notwithstanding.—What, doctor, no assistance!

ROSY. Efacks, I can do nothing, but there's the German quack, whom you wanted to send from town; I met him at the next door, and I know he has antidotes for all poisons.

JUSTICE. Fetch him, my dear friend, fetch him! I'll get him a diploma if he cures me.

ROSY. Well, there's no time to be lost; you continue to swell immensely. *[Exit.]*

MRS. BRIDGET. What, my dear, will you submit to be cured by a quack nostrum-monger? For my part, as much as I love you, I had rather follow you to your grave than see you owe your life to any but a regular-bred physician. 780

JUSTICE. I'm sensible of your affection, dearest; and be assured nothing consoles me in my melancholy situation so much as the thoughts of leaving you behind.

Re-enter DOCTOR ROSY, with LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR disguised.

ROSY. Great luck; met him passing by the door.

O'CONNOR. Metto dowsei pulsum.

ROSY. He desires me to feel your pulse. 790

JUSTICE. Can't he speak English?

ROSY. Not a word.

O'CONNOR. *Palio vivem mortem soonem.*

ROSY. He says you have not six hours to live.

JUSTICE. O mercy! does he know my distemper?

ROSY. I believe not.

JUSTICE. Tell him 'tis black arsenic they have given me.

ROSY. *Geneable illi arsnecca.*

O'CONNOR. *Pisonatus.*

JUSTICE. What does he say?

800

ROSY. He says you are poisoned.

JUSTICE. We know that; but what will be the effect?

ROSY. Quid effectum?

O'CONNOR. Diable tutellum.

ROSY. He says you'll die presently.

JUSTICE. Oh horrible! What, no antidote?

O'CONNOR. Curum benakere bono fullum.

JUSTICE. What, does he say I must row in a boat to Fulham?

ROSY. He says he'll undertake to cure you for three 810
thousand pounds.

MRS. BRIDGET. Three thousand pounds! three thousand
halvers!—No, lovee, you shall never submit to such
impositions; die at once, and be a customer to none of
them.

JUSTICE. I won't die, Bridget—I don't like death.

MRS. BRIDGET. Psha! there is nothing in it: a moment,
and it is over.

JUSTICE. Ay, but it leaves a numbness behind that lasts
a plaguy long time.

820

MRS. BRIDGET. O my dear, pray consider the will.

Enter LAURETTA.

LAURETTA. O my father, what is this I hear?

O'CONNOR. Quiddam seomriam deos tollam rosam.

ROSY. The doctor is astonished at the sight of your fair
daughter.

JUSTICE. How so?

O'CONNOR. Damsellum livivum suvum rislibani.

ROSY. He says that he has lost his heart to her, and that if you will give him leave to pay his addresses to the young lady, and promise your consent to the union, if 830 he should gain her affections, he will on those conditions cure you instantly, without fee or reward.

JUSTICE. The devil! did he say all that in so few words? What a fine language it is! Well, I agree, if he can prevail on the girl.—[*Aside.*] And that I am sure he never will.

ROSY. Greal.

O'CONNOR. Writhum bothum.

ROSY. He says you must give this under your hand, while he writes you a miraculous receipt. 840

[*Both sit down to write.*]

LAURETTA. Do, mamma, tell me the meaning of this.

MRS. BRIDGET. Don't speak to me, girl.—Unnatural parent!

JUSTICE. There, doctor; there's what he requires.

ROSY. And here's your receipt: read it yourself.

JUSTICE. Hey! what's here? plain English!

ROSY. Read it out; a wondrous nostrum, I'll answer for it.

JUSTICE. [*Reads.*] *In reading this you are cured, by your affectionate son-in-law, O'CONNOR.—Who, in the name* 850 *of Beelzebub, sirrah, who are you?*

O'CONNOR. Your affectionate son-in-law, O'Connor, and your very humble servant, Humphrey Hum.

JUSTICE. 'Tis false, you dog! you are not my son-in-law; for I'll be poison'd again, and you shall be hanged.—I'll die, sirrah, and leave Bridget my estate.

MRS. BRIDGET. Ay, pray do, my dear, leave me your estate. I'm sure he deserves to be hanged.

JUSTICE. He does, you say!—Hark'ee, Bridget, you showed such a tender concern for me when you thought 860 me poisoned, that for the future I am resolved never to take your advice again in any thing.—[To LIEUTENANT O'CONNOR.] So, do you hear, sir, you are an Irishman and a soldier, an't you?

O'CONNOR. I am, sir, and proud of both.

JUSTICE. The two things on earth I most hate; so I'll tell you what—renounce your country and sell your commission, and I'll forgive you.

O'CONNOR. Hark'ee, Mr. Justice—if you were not the father of my Lauretta, I would pull your nose for 870 asking the first, and break your bones for desiring the second.

ROSY. Ay, ay, you're right.

JUSTICE. Is he? then I'm sure I must be wrong.—Here, sir, I give my daughter to you, who are the most impudent dog I ever saw in my life.

O'CONNOR. Oh, sir, say what you please; with such a gift as Lauretta, every word is a compliment.

MRS. BRIDGET. Well, my lovee, I think this will be a good subject for us to quarrel about the rest of our 880 lives.

JUSTICE. Why, truly, my dear, I think so, though we are seldom at a loss for that.

ROSY. This is all as it should be.—My Alexander, I give you joy, and you, my little god-daughter; and now my sincere wish is, that you may make just such a wife as my poor dear Dolly. *[Exeunt omnes.]*

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

The Falcon

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON: 1809-92. Educated at home, at Louth Grammar School, and at Trinity College, Cambridge. Won the Chancellor's medal for English verse, 1829, with a poem on Timbuctoo. Published *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* a year later, but was not recognized as a major poet until the volume of 1842 appeared. Sir Robert Peel granted him a pension of £200, and in 1850 he succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate. His figure dominated Victorian poetry, but the dramatic laurels to which he aspired were denied to him, and not even Irving and Ellen Terry could make box-office successes of *Becket*, *Queen Mary*, or *The Cup*. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal produced *The Falcon* at the St. James's Theatre in December 1879, when it had a run of sixty-seven nights. The story was borrowed from Boccaccio; it is the ninth of the fifth day of the *Decamerone*.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE COUNT FEDERICO DEGLI ALBERIGHI.
FILIPPO, *Count's foster-brother.*

THE LADY GIOVANNA.
ELISABETTA, *the Count's nurse.*

SCENE. *An Italian Cottage. Castle and Mountains seen through Window.*

ELISABETTA *discovered seated on stool in window darning.* The COUNT *with Falcon on his hand comes down through the door at back. A withered wreath on the wall.*

ELISABETTA. So, my lord, the Lady Giovanna, who hath been away so long, came back last night with her son to the castle.

COUNT. Hear that, my bird! Art thou not jealous of her?

My princess of the cloud, my plumed purveyor,
 My far-eyed queen of the winds—thou that canst soar
 Beyond the morning lark, and howsoe'er
 Thy quarry wind and wheel, swoop down upon him
 Eagle-like, lightning-like—strike, make his feathers
 Glance in mid heaven. [*Crosses to chair.*

I would thou hadst a mate! 10
 Thy breed will die with thee, and mine with me:
 I am as lone and loveless as thyself. [*Sits in chair.*
 Giovanna here! Ay, ruffle thyself—*be* jealous!
 Thou should'st be jealous of her. Tho' I bred thee
 The full-train'd marvel of all falconry,
 And love thee and thou me, yet if Giovanna
 Be here again—No, no! Buss me, my bird!
 The stately widow has no heart for me.
 Thou art the last friend left me upon earth—
 No, no again to that. [*Rises and turns.*

My good old nurse, 20
 I had forgotten thou wast sitting there.

ELISABETTA. Ay, and forgotten thy foster-brother too.

COUNT. Bird-babble for my falcon! Let it pass.

What art thou doing there?

ELISABETTA. Darning, your lordship.

We cannot flaunt it in new feathers now:

Nay, if we *will* buy diamond necklaces

To please our lady, we must darn, my lord.

This old thing here [*points to necklace round her neck*],
 they are but blue beads—my Piero,

God rest his honest soul, he bought 'em for me,

Ay, but he knew I meant to marry him. 30

How couldst thou do it, my son? How couldst thou
 do it?

COUNT. She saw it at a dance, upon a neck
Less lovely than her own, and long'd for it.

ELISABETTA. She told thee as much?

COUNT. No, no—a friend of hers.

ELISABETTA. Shame on her that she took it at thy hands,
She rich enough to have bought it for herself!

COUNT. She would have robb'd me then of a great
pleasure.

ELISABETTA. But hath she yet return'd thy love?

COUNT. Not yet!

ELISABETTA. She should return thy necklace then.

COUNT. Ay, if
She knew the giver; but I bound the seller 40
To silence, and I left it privily
At Florence, in her palace.

ELISABETTA. And sold thine own
To buy it for her. She not know? She knows
There's none such other——

COUNT. Madman anywhere.
Speak freely, tho' to call a madman mad
Will hardly help to make him sane again.

Enter FILIPPO.

FILIPPO. Ah, the women, the women! Ah, Monna
Giovanna, you here again! you that have the face of
an angel and the heart of a—that's too positive! You
that have a score of lovers and have not a heart for any 50
of them—that's positive-negative: you that have *not*
the head of a toad, and *not* a heart like the jewel in it
—that's too negative; you that have a cheek like a

peach and a heart like the stone in it—that's positive again—that's better!

ELISABETTA. Sh—sh—Filippo!

FILIPPO [*turns half round*]. Here has our master been a-glorifying and a-velveting and a-silking himself, and a-peacocking and a-spreading to catch her eye for a dozen year, till he hasn't an eye left in his own tail to 60 flourish among the peahens, and all along o' you, Monna Giovanna, all along o' you!

ELISABETTA. Sh—sh—Filippo! Can't you hear that you are saying behind his back what you see you are saying afore his face?

COUNT. Let him—he never spares me to my face!

FILIPPO. No, my lord, I never spare your lordship to your lordship's face, nor behind your lordship's back, nor to right, nor to left, nor to round about and back to your lordship's face again, for I'm honest, your 70 lordship.

COUNT. Come, come, Filippo, what is there in the larder? [*ELISABETTA crosses to fireplace and puts on wood.*

FILIPPO. Shelves and hooks, shelves and hooks, and when I see the shelves I am like to hang myself on the hooks.

COUNT. No bread?

FILIPPO. Half a breakfast for a rat!

COUNT. Milk?

FILIPPO. Three laps for a cat!

80

COUNT. Cheese?

FILIPPO. A supper for twelve mites.

COUNT. Eggs?

FILIPPO. One, but addled.

COUNT. No bird?

FILIPPO. Half a tit and a hern's bill.

COUNT. Let be thy jokes and thy jerks, man! Anything or nothing?

FILIPPO. Well, my lord, if all-but-nothing be anything, and one plate of dried prunes be all-but-nothing, then ⁹⁰ there is anything in your lordship's larder at your lordship's service, if your lordship care to call for it.

COUNT. Good mother, happy was the prodigal son,

For he return'd to the rich father; I

But add my poverty to thine. And all

Thro' following of my fancy. Pray thee make

Thy slender meal out of those scraps and shreds

Filippo spoke of. As for him and me,

There sprouts a salad in the garden still.

[*To the Falcon*] Why didst thou miss thy quarry
yester-even? 100

To-day, my beauty, thou must dash us down

Our dinner from the skies. Away, Filippo!

[*Exit, followed by FILIPPO.*]

ELISABETTA. I knew it would come to this. She has beggared him. I always knew it would come to this!

[*Goes up to table as if to resume darning, and looks out of window.*] Why, as I live, there is Monna Giovanna

coming down the hill from the castle. Stops and stares at our cottage. Ay, ay! stare at it: it's all you have

left us. Shame on you! *She* beautiful: sleek as a miller's

mouse! Meal enough, meat enough, well fed; but ¹¹⁰

beautiful—bah! Nay, see, why she turns down the

path through our little vineyard, and I sneezed three times this morning. Coming to visit my lord, for the first time in her life too! Why, bless the saints! I'll be bound to confess her love to him at last. I forgive her, I forgive her! I knew it would come to this—I always knew it must come to this! [*Going up to door during latter part of speech and opens it.*] Come in, Madonna, come in. [*Retires to front of table and curtseys as the LADY GIOVANNA enters, then moves chair towards the hearth.*] Nay, ¹²⁰ let me place this chair for your ladyship.

[*LADY GIOVANNA moves slowly down stage, then crosses to chair, looking about her, bows as she sees the Madonna over fireplace, then sits in chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA. Can I speak with the Count?

ELISABETTA. Ay, my lady, but won't you speak with the old woman first, and tell her all about it and make her happy? for I've been on my knees every day for these half-dozen years in hope that the saints would send us this blessed morning; and he always took you so kindly, he always took the world so kindly. When he was a little one, and I put the bitters on my breast to wean him, he made a wry mouth at it, but he took it so ¹³⁰ kindly, and your ladyship has given him bitters enough in this world, and he never made a wry mouth at you, he always took you so kindly—which is more than I did, my lady, more than I did—and he so handsome—and bless your sweet face, you look as beautiful this morning as the very Madonna her own self—and better late than never—but come when they will—then or now—it's all for the best, come when they will—they are made by the blessed saints—these marriages.

[*Raises her hands.*

LADY GIOVANNA. Marriages? I shall never marry again! 140

ELISABETTA [*rises and turns*]. Shame on her then!

LADY GIOVANNA. Where is the Count?

ELISABETTA. Just gone

To fly his falcon.

LADY GIOVANNA. Call him back and say
I come to breakfast with him.

ELISABETTA. Holy mother!

To breakfast! Oh sweet saints! one plate of prunes!

Well, Madam, I will give your message to him.

[*Exit.*]

LADY GIOVANNA. His falcon, and I come to ask for his
falcon,

The pleasure of his eyes—boast of his hand—

Pride of his heart—the solace of his hours—

His one companion here—nay, I have heard

That, thro' his late magnificence of living 150

And this last costly gift to mine own self,

[*Shows diamond necklace.*]

He hath become so beggar'd, that his falcon

Ev'n wins his dinner for him in the field.

That must be talk, not truth, but truth or talk,

How can I ask for his falcon?

[*Rises and moves as she speaks.*]

O my sick boy!

My daily fading Florio, it is thou

Hath set me this hard task, for when I say

What can I do—what can I get for thee?

He answers, 'Get the Count to give me his falcon,

And that will make me well.' Yet if I ask, 160

He loves me, and he knows I know he loves me!

Will he not pray me to return his love—
 To marry him?—*[pause]*—I can never marry him.
 His grandsire struck my grandsire in a brawl
 At Florence, and my grandsire stabb'd him there.
 The feud between our houses is the bar
 I cannot cross; I dare not brave my brother,
 Break with my kin. My brother hates him, scorns
 The noblest-natured man alive, and I—
 Who have that reverence for him that I scarce 170
 Dare beg him to receive his diamonds back—
 How can I, dare I, ask him for his falcon?

[Puts diamonds in her casket.]

Re-enter COUNT and FILIPPO. COUNT turns to FILIPPO.

COUNT. Do what I said; I cannot do it myself.

FILIPPO. Why then, my lord, we are pauper'd out and out.

COUNT. Do what I said! *[Advances and bows low.]*

Welcome to this poor cottage, my dear lady.

LADY GIOVANNA. And welcome turns a cottage to a palace.

COUNT. 'Tis long since we have met!

LADY GIOVANNA. To make amends

I come this day to break my fast with you.

COUNT. I am much honour'd—yes—*[Turns to FILIPPO.]* 180

Do what I told thee. Must I do it myself?

FILIPPO. I will, I will. *[Sighs.]* Poor fellow! *[Exit.]*

COUNT. Lady, you bring your light into my cottage

Who never deign'd to shine into my palace.

My palace wanting you was but a cottage;

My cottage, while you grace it, is a palace.

LADY GIOVANNA. In cottage or in palace, being still
Beyond your fortunes, you are still the king
Of courtesy and liberality.

COUNT. I trust I still maintain my courtesy; 190
My liberality perforce is dead
Thro' lack of means of giving.

LADY GIOVANNA. Yet I come
To ask a gift. [*Moves toward him a little.*]

COUNT. It will be hard, I fear,
To find one shock upon the field when all
The harvest has been carried.

LADY GIOVANNA. But my boy—
[*Aside.*] No, no! not yet—I cannot!

COUNT. Ay, how is he,
That bright inheritor of your eyes—your boy?

LADY GIOVANNA. Alas, my Lord Federigo, he hath
fallen
Into a sickness, and it troubles me.

COUNT. Sick! is it so? why, when he came last year 200
To see me hawking, he was well enough:
And then I taught him all our hawking-phrases.

LADY GIOVANNA. Oh yes, and once you let him fly your
falcon.

COUNT. How charm'd he was! what wonder?—A
gallant boy,
A noble bird, each perfect of the breed.

LADY GIOVANNA [*sinks in chair*]. What do you rate her at?

COUNT. My bird? a hundred
Gold pieces once were offer'd by the Duke.
I had no heart to part with her for money.

LADY GIOVANNA. No, not for money.

[COUNT *turns away and sighs.*

Wherefore do you sigh?

210

COUNT. I have lost a friend of late.

LADY GIOVANNA. I could sigh with you

For fear of losing more than friend, a son;

And if he leave me—all the rest of life—

That wither'd wreath were of more worth to me.

[*Looking at wreath on wall.*

COUNT. That wither'd wreath is of more worth to me

Than all the blossom, all the leaf of this

New-wakening year. [Goes and takes down wreath.

LADY GIOVANNA. And yet I never saw

The land so rich in blossom as this year.

COUNT [*holding wreath toward her*]. Was not the year
when this was gather'd richer?

220

LADY GIOVANNA. How long ago was that?

COUNT. Alas, ten summers!

A lady that was beautiful as day

Sat by me at a rustic festival

With other beauties on a mountain meadow,

And she was the most beautiful of all;

Then but fifteen, and still as beautiful.

The mountain flowers grew thickly round about.

I made a wreath with some of these; I ask'd

A ribbon from her hair to bind it with;

I whisper'd, 'Let me crown you Queen of Beauty,' 230

And softly placed the chaplet on her head.

A colour, which has colour'd all my life,

Flush'd in her face; then I was call'd away;

And presently all rose, and so departed.

Ah! she had thrown my chaplet on the grass,
And there I found it.

[Lets his hands fall, holding wreath despondingly.]

LADY GIOVANNA *[after pause]*. How long since do you say?

COUNT. That was the very year before you married.

LADY GIOVANNA. When I was married you were at the wars.

COUNT. Had she not thrown my chaplet on the grass,
It may be I had never seen the wars. 240

[Replaces wreath whence he had taken it.]

LADY GIOVANNA. Ah, but, my lord, there ran a rumour then

That you were kill'd in battle. I can tell you
True tears that year were shed for you in Florence.

COUNT. It might have been as well for me. Unhappily
I was but wounded by the enemy there
And then imprison'd.

LADY GIOVANNA. Happily, however,
I see you quite recover'd of your wound.

COUNT. No, no, not quite, Madonna, not yet, not yet.

Re-enters FILIPPO.

FILIPPO. My lord, a word with you.

COUNT. Pray, pardon me!
[LADY GIOVANNA crosses, and passes behind chair and takes down wreath; then goes to chair by table.]

COUNT *[to FILIPPO]*. What is it, Filippo?

FILIPPO. Spoons, your lordship.

COUNT. Spoons? 250

FILIPPO. Yes, my lord, for wasn't my lady born with a golden spoon in her ladyship's mouth, and we haven't never so much as a silver one for the golden lips of her ladyship.

COUNT. Have we not half a score of silver spoons?

FILIPPO. Half o' one, my lord!

COUNT. How half of one?

FILIPPO. I trod upon him even now, my lord, in my hurry, and broke him.

COUNT. And the other nine?

260

FILIPPO. Sold! but shall I not mount with your lordship's leave to her ladyship's castle, in your lordship's and her ladyship's name, and confer with her ladyship's seneschal, and so descend again with some of her ladyship's own appurtenances?

COUNT. Why—no, man. Only see your cloth be clean.

[Exit FILIPPO.]

LADY GIOVANNA. Ay, ay, this faded ribbon was the mode

In Florence ten years back. What's here? a scroll
Pinned to the wreath.

My lord, you have said so much
Of this poor wreath that I was bold enough
To take it down, if but to guess what flowers
Had made it; and I find a written scroll
That seems to run in rhymings. Might I read?

270

COUNT. Ay, if you will.

LADY GIOVANNA. It should be 'if you can.'

[Reads.] 'Dead mountain.' Nay, for who could trace
a hand

So wild and staggering?



COUNT. This was penn'd, Madonna,
Close to the grating on a winter morn
In the perpetual twilight of a prison,
When he that made it, having his right hand
Lamed in the battle, wrote it with his left. 280

LADY GIOVANNA. O heavens! the very letters seem to
shake
With cold, with pain perhaps, poor prisoner! Well,
Tell me the words—or better—for I see
There goes a musical score along with them,
Repeat them to their music.

COUNT. You can touch
No chord in me that would not answer you
In music.

LADY GIOVANNA. That is musically said.

[COUNT takes guitar. LADY GIOVANNA sits listening
with wreath in her hand, and quietly removes scroll
and places it on table at the end of the song.]

COUNT [*sings, playing guitar*]. 'Dead mountain flowers,
dead mountain-meadow flowers,
Dearer than when you made your mountain gay,
Sweeter than any violet of to-day, 290
Richer than all the wide world-wealth of May,
To me, tho' all your bloom has died away,
You bloom again, dead mountain-meadow flowers.'

Enter ELISABETTA with cloth.

ELISABETTA. A word with you, my lord!

COUNT [*singing*]. 'O mountain flowers!'

ELISABETTA. A word, my lord! [*Louder*].

COUNT [*sings*]. 'Dead flowers!'

ELISABETTA. A word, my lord! [*Louder*].

COUNT. I pray you pardon me again!

[LADY GIOVANNA *looking at wreath.*

COUNT [*to ELISABETTA*]. What is it?

ELISABETTA. My lord, we have but one piece of earthenware to serve the salad in to my lady, and that cracked!

COUNT. Why then, that flower'd bowl my ancestor
Fetch'd from the farthest east—we never use it
For fear of breakage—but this day has brought
A great occasion. You can take it, nurse! 300

ELISABETTA. I did take it, my lord, but what with my lady's coming that had so flurried me, and what with the fear of breaking it, I did break it, my lord: it is broken!

COUNT. My one thing left of value in the world!
No matter! see your cloth be white as snow!

ELISABETTA [*pointing thro' window*]. White? I warrant 310
thee, my son, as the snow yonder on the very tip-top
o' the mountain.

COUNT. And yet to speak white truth, my good old mother,
I have seen it like the snow on the moraine.

ELISABETTA. How can your lordship say so? There my
my lord! [*Lays cloth.*

O my dear son, be not unkind to me.
And one word more. [*Going—returns.*

COUNT [*touching guitar*]. Good! let it be but one.

ELISABETTA. Hath she return'd thy love?

COUNT. Not yet!

ELISABETTA. And will she?

COUNT [*looking at LADY GIOVANNA*]. I scarce believe it! 1

ELISABETTA. Shame upon her then!

[Exit. 320

COUNT [*sings*]. 'Dead mountain flowers'—

Ah well, my nurse has broken
The thread of my dead flowers, as she has broken
My china bowl. My memory is as dead.

[*Goes and replaces guitar.*

Strange that the words at home with me so long
Should fly like bosom friends when needed most.
So by your leave if you would hear the rest,
The writing.

LADY GIOVANNA [*holding wreath toward him*]. There! my
lord, you are a poet,

And can you not imagine that the wreath,
Set, as you say, so lightly on her head,
Fell with her motion as she rose, and she,
A girl, a child, then but fifteen, however
Flutter'd or flatter'd by your notice of her,
Was yet too bashful to return for it?

330

COUNT. Was it so indeed? was it so? was it so?

[*Leans forward to take wreath, and touches LADY GIOVANNA'S hand, which she withdraws hastily; he places wreath on corner of chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA [*with dignity*]. I did not say, my lord,
that it was so;

I said you might imagine it was so.

Enter FILIPPO with bowl of salad, which he places on table.

FILIPPO. Here's a fine salad for my lady, for tho' we
have been a soldier, and ridden by his lordship's side,
and seen the red of the battle-field, yet are we now
drill-sergeant to his lordship's lettuces, and profess to 340
to be great in green things and in garden-stuff.

LADY GIOVANNA. I thank thee, good Filippo.

[*Exit FILIPPO.*

Enter ELISABETTA with bird on a dish which she places on table.

ELISABETTA [*close to table*]. Here's a fine fowl for my lady; I had scant time to do him in. I hope he be not underdone, for we be undone in the doing of him.

LADY GIOVANNA. I thank you, my good nurse.

FILIPPO [*re-entering with plate of prunes*]. And here are fine fruits for my lady—prunes, my lady, from the tree that my lord himself planted here in the blossom of his boyhood—and so I, Filippo, being, with your lady-ship's pardon, and as your ladyship knows, his lordship's own foster-brother, would commend them to your ladyship's most peculiar appreciation.

[*Puts plate on table.*

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

LADY GIOVANNA [*COUNT leads her to table*]. Will you not eat with me, my lord?

COUNT.

I cannot,

Not a morsel, not one morsel. I have broken

My fast already. I will pledge you. Wine!

Filippo, wine!

[*Sits near table; FILIPPO brings flask, fills the COUNT's goblet, then LADY GIOVANNA's; ELISABETTA stands at the back of LADY GIOVANNA's chair.*

COUNT.

It is but thin and cold,

Not like the vintage blowing round your castle.

We lie too deep down in the shadow here.

Your ladyship lives higher in the sun.

360

[*They pledge each other and drink.*

LADY GIOVANNA. If I might send you down a flask or two

Of that same vintage? There is iron in it.
It has been much commended as a medicine.
I give it my sick son, and if you be
Not quite recover'd of your wound, the wine
Might help you. None has ever told me yet
The story of your battle and your wound.

FILIPPO [*coming forward*]. I can tell you, my lady, I can tell you. 370

ELISABETTA. Filippo! will you take the word out of your master's own mouth?

FILIPPO. Was it there to take? Put it there, my lord.

COUNT. Giovanna, my dear lady, in this same battle
We had been beaten—they were ten to one—
The trumpets of the fight had echo'd down,
I and Filippo here had done our best,
And, having passed unwounded from the field,
Were seated sadly at a fountain side,
Our horses grazing by us, when a troop, 380
Laden with booty and with a flag of ours
Ta'en in the fight——

FILIPPO. Ay, but we fought for it back,
And kill'd——

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

COUNT. A troop of horse——

FILIPPO. Five hundred!

COUNT. Say fifty!

FILIPPO. And we kill'd 'em by the score!

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

FILIPPO. Well, well, well! I bite my tongue.

COUNT. We may have left their fifty less by five.

However, staying not to count how many,
But anger'd at their flaunting of our flag,
We mounted, and we dash'd into the heart of 'em. 390
I wore the lady's chaplet round my neck;
It served me for a blessed rosary.
I am sure that more than one brave fellow owed
His death to the charm in it.

ELISABETTA. Hear that, my lady!

COUNT. I cannot tell how long we strove before
Our horses fell beneath us; down we went
Crush'd, hack'd at, trampled underfoot. The night,
As some cold-manner'd friend may strangely do us
The truest service, had a touch of frost
That help'd to check the flowing of the blood. 400
My last sight ere I swoon'd was one sweet face
Crown'd with the wreath. *That* seem'd to come
and go.
They left us there for dead!

ELISABETTA. Hear that, my lady!

FILIPPO. Ay, and I left two fingers there for dead. See,
my lady! [*Showing his hand.*]

LADY GIOVANNA. I see, Filippo!

FILIPPO. And I have small hope of the gentleman gout
in my great toe.

LADY GIOVANNA. And why, Filippo? [*Smiling absently.*]

FILIPPO. I left him there for dead too! 410

ELISABETTA. She smiles at him—how hard the woman is!
My lady, if your ladyship were not

Too proud to look upon the garland, you
Would find it stain'd——

COUNT [*rising*]. Silence, Elisabetta!

ELISABETTA. Stain'd with the blood of the best heart
that ever

Beat for one woman. [*Points to wreath on chair.*]

LADY GIOVANNA [*rising slowly*]. I can eat no more!

COUNT. You have but trifled with our homely salad,
But dallied with a single lettuce-leaf;
Not eaten anything.

LADY GIOVANNA. Nay, nay, I cannot.

You know, my lord, I told you I was troubled. 420

My one child Florio lying still so sick,

I bound myself, and by a solemn vow,

That I would touch no flesh till he were well

Here, or else well in Heaven, where all is well.

[*ELISABETTA clears table of bird and salad: FILIPPO
snatches up the plate of prunes and holds them to LADY
GIOVANNA.*]

FILIPPO. But the prunes, my lady, from the tree that his
lordship——

LADY GIOVANNA. Not now, Filippo. My lord Federigo,
Can I not speak with you once more alone?

COUNT. You hear, Filippo? My good fellow, go!

FILIPPO. But the prunes that your lordship—— 430

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

COUNT. Ay, prune our company of thine own and go!

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

FILIPPO [*turning*]. Well, well! the women! [*Exit.*]

COUNT. And thou too leave us, my dear nurse, alone.

ELISABETTA [*folding up cloth and going*]. And me too! Ay, the dear nurse will leave you alone; but, for all that, she that has eaten the yolk is scarce like to swallow the shell.

[*Turns and curtsies stiffly to* LADY GIOVANNA, *then exit.* LADY GIOVANNA *takes out diamond necklace from casket.*

LADY GIOVANNA. I have anger'd your good nurse; these
old-world servants 440
Are all but flesh and blood with those they serve.
My lord, I have a present to return you,
And afterwards a boon to crave of you.

COUNT. No, my most honour'd and long-worshipt lady,
Poor Federigo degli Alberighi
Takes nothing in return from you except
Return of his affection—can deny
Nothing to you that you require of him.

LADY GIOVANNA. Then I require you to take back your
diamonds— [Offering necklace.
I doubt not they are yours. No other heart 450
Of such magnificence in courtesy
Beats—out of heaven. They seem'd too rich a prize
To trust with any messenger. I came
In person to return them. [COUNT *draws back.*
If the phrase
'Return' displease you, we will say—exchange them
For your—for your—

COUNT [*takes a step toward her and then back*]. For mine—
and what of mine?

LADY GIOVANNA. Well, shall we say this wreath and
your sweet rhymes?

COUNT. But have you ever worn my diamonds?

LADY GIOVANNA.

No!

For that would seem accepting of your love.

I cannot brave my brother—but be sure

460

That I shall never marry again, my lord!

COUNT. Sure?

LADY GIOVANNA. Yes!

COUNT. Is this your brother's order?

LADY GIOVANNA.

No!

For he would marry me to the richest man

In Florence; but I think you know the saying—

'Better a man without riches, than riches without a
man.'

COUNT. A noble saying—and acted on would yield

A nobler breed of men and women. Lady,

I find you a shrewd bargainer. The wreath

That once you wore outvalues twenty-fold

The diamonds that you never deign'd to wear.

470

But lay them there for a moment!

*[Points to table. LADY GIOVANNA places necklace on
table.]*

And be you

Gracious enough to let me know the boon

By granting which, if aught be mine to grant,

I should be made more happy than I hoped

Ever to be again.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Then keep your wreath,

But you will find me a shrewd bargainer still.

I cannot keep your diamonds, for the gift

I ask for, to *my* mind and at this present

Outvalues all the jewels upon earth.

COUNT. It should be love that thus outvalues all.

480

You speak like love, and yet you love me not.
I have nothing in this world but love for you.

LADY GIOVANNA. Love? it is love, love for my dying boy
Moves me to ask it of you.

COUNT. What? my time?
Is it my time? Well, I can give my time
To him that is a part of you, your son.
Shall I return to the castle with you? Shall I
Sit by him, read to him, tell him my tales,
Sing him my songs? You know that I can touch
The ghittern to some purpose.

LADY GIOVANNA. No, not that! 490
I thank you heartily for that—and you,
I doubt not from your nobleness of nature,
Will pardon me for asking what I ask.

COUNT. Giovanna, dear Giovanna, I that once
The wildest of the random youth of Florence
Before I saw you—all my nobleness
Of nature, as you deign to call it, draws
From you, and from my constancy to you.
No more, but speak.

LADY GIOVANNA. I will. You know sick people,
More specially sick children, have strange fancies, 500
Strange longings; and to thwart them in their mood
May work them grievous harm at times, may even
Hasten their end. I would you had a son!
It might be easier then for you to make
Allowance for a mother—her—who comes
To rob you of your one delight on earth.
How often has my sick boy yearn'd for this!
I have put him off as often; but to-day
I dared not—so much weaker, so much worse

For last day's journey. I was weeping for him; 510
He gave me his hand: 'I should be well again
If the good Count would give me——'

COUNT.

Give me.

LADY GIOVANNA.

His falcon.

COUNT [*starts back*]. My falcon!

LADY GIOVANNA.

Yes, your falcon, Federigo!

COUNT. Alas, I cannot!

LADY GIOVANNA.

Cannot? Even so!

I fear'd as much. O this unhappy world!

How shall I break it to him? how shall I tell him?

The boy may die: more blessed were the rags

Of some pale beggar-woman seeking alms

For her sick son, if he were like to live,

Than all my childless wealth, if mine must die. 520

I was to blame—the love you said you bore me—

My lord, we thank you for your entertainment.

[*With a stately curtsey.*]

And so return—Heaven help him!—to our son.

[*Turns.*]

COUNT [*rushes forward*]. Stay, stay, I am most unlucky,
most unhappy.

You never had look'd in on me before,

And when you came and dipt your sovereign head

Thro' these low doors, you ask'd to eat with me.

I had but emptiness to set before you,

No, not a draught of milk, no, not an egg,

Nothing but my brave bird, my noble falcon, 530

My comrade of the house, and of the field.

She had to die for it—she died for you.

Perhaps I thought with those of old, the nobler

The victim was, the more acceptable
Might be the sacrifice. I feel you scarce
Will thank me for your entertainment now.

LADY GIOVANNA [*returning*]. I bear with him no longer.

COUNT. No, Madonna!

And he will have to bear with it as he may.

LADY GIOVANNA. I break with him for ever!

COUNT. Yes, Giovanna,

But he will keep his love to you for ever! 540

LADY GIOVANNA. You? you? not you! My brother! my
hard brother!

O Federigo, Federigo, I love you!

Spite of ten thousand brothers, Federigo.

[*Falls at his feet.*]

COUNT [*impetuously*]. Why then the dying of my noble
bird

Hath served me better than her living—then

[*Takes diamonds from table.*]

These diamonds are both yours and mine—have won
Their value again—beyond all markets—there
I lay them for the first time round your neck.

[*Lays necklace round her neck.*]

And then this chaplet—No more feuds, but peace,

Peace and conciliation! I will make 550

Your brother love me. See, I tear away

The leaves were darken'd by the battle—

[*Pulls leaves off and throws them down.*]

—crown you

Again with the same crown my Queen of Beauty.

[*Places wreath on her head.*]

Rise—I could almost think that the dead garland

Will break once more into the living blossom.
Nay, nay, I pray you rise.

[Raises her with both hands.]

We two together

Will help to heal your son—your son and mine—

We shall do it—we shall do it. *[Embraces her.]*

The purpose of my being is accomplish'd,

And I am happy!

LADY GIOVANNA.

And I too, Federigo.

560

JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE

Riders to the Sea

JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE: 1871-1909. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and early conceived the desire to 'do for the west of Ireland what Pierre Loti had done for the Bretons'. In 1904 became director of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, where, however, his own plays—notably *The Play Boy of the Western World*—sometimes met with a very mixed reception. *Riders to the Sea* is an admirable example of the technique that he evolved, and of his peculiar diction, at once colloquial and dignified.

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

MAURYA, *an old Woman.*

CATHLEEN, *her Daughter.*

BARTLEY, *her Son.*

NORA, *a younger Daughter.*

MEN AND WOMEN.

SCENE. *An Island off the West of Ireland.*

Cottage kitchen, with nets, oilskins, spinning-wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc. CATHLEEN, a girl of about twenty, finishes kneading cake, and puts it down in the pot-oven by the fire; then wipes her hands, and begins to spin at the wheel. NORA, a young girl, puts her head in at the door.

NORA [*in a low voice*]. Where is she?

CATHLEEN. She's lying down, God help her, and maybe sleeping, if she's able.

[*NORA comes in softly and takes a bundle from under her shawl.*]

CATHLEEN [*spinning the wheel rapidly*]. What is it you have?

NORA. The young priest is after bringing them. It's a--shirt and a plain stocking were got off a drowned man in Donegal.

[CATHLEEN stops her wheel with a sudden movement, and leans out to listen.

NORA. We're to find out if it's Michael's they are, some time herself will be down looking by the sea. 10

CATHLEEN. How would they be Michael's, Nora? How would he go the length of that way to the far north?

NORA. The young priest says he's known the like of it. 'If it's Michael's they are,' says he, 'you can tell herself he's got a clean burial, by the grace of God; and if they're not his, let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death,' says he, 'with crying and lamenting.'

[The door which NORA half closed is blown open by a gust of wind.

CATHLEEN [looking out anxiously]. Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the 20 Galway fair?

NORA. 'I won't stop him,' says he; 'but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute,' says he, 'with no son living.'

CATHLEEN. Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

NORA. Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned to the wind. [She goes over to the table with the bundle.] Shall I open it now? 30

CATHLEEN. Maybe she'd wake up on us, and come in before we'd done [coming to the table]. It's a long time we'll be, and the two of us crying.

NORA [goes to the inner door and listens]. She's moving about on the bed. She'll be coming in a minute.

CATHLEEN. Give me the ladder, and I'll put them up in the turf-loft, the way she won't know of them at all, and maybe when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating from the east.

[They put the ladder against the gable of the chimney; CATHLEEN goes up a few steps and hides the bundle in the turf-loft. MAURYA comes from the inner room.]

MAURYA *[looking up at CATHLEEN and speaking querulously]*. 40
Isn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?

CATHLEEN. There's a cake baking at the fire for a short space *[throwing down the turf]*, and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if he goes to Connemara.

[NORA picks up the turf and puts it round the pot-oven.]

MAURYA *[sitting down on a stool at the fire]*. He won't go this day with the wind rising from the south and west. He won't go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely.

NORA. He'll not stop him, mother; and I heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and Colum Shawn saying 50
he would go.

MAURYA. Where is he itself?

NORA. He went down to see would there be another boat sailing in the week, and I'm thinking it won't be long till he's here now, for the tide's turning at the green head, and the hooker's tacking from the east.

CATHLEEN. I hear some one passing the big stones.

NORA *[looking out]*. He's coming now, and he in a hurry.

BARTLEY *[comes in and looks round the room. Speaking sadly and quietly]*. Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, 60
was bought in Connemara?

CATHLEEN [*coming down*] Give it to him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. I hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it.

NORA [*giving him a rope*]. Is that it, Bartley?

MAURYA. You'd do right to leave that rope, Bartley, hanging by the boards. [BARTLEY *takes the rope*.] It will be wanting in this place, I'm telling you, if Michael is washed up to-morrow morning, or the next morning, or any morning in the week; for it's a deep grave we'll 70 make him, by the grace of God.

BARTLEY [*beginning to work with the rope*]. I've no halter the way I can ride down on the mare, and I must go now quickly. This is the one boat going for two weeks or beyond it, and the fair will be a good fair for horses, I heard them saying below.

MAURYA. It's a hard thing they'll be saying below if the body is washed up and there's no man in it to make the coffin, and I after giving a big price for the finest white boards you'd find in Connemara. 80

[*She looks round at the boards.*]

BARTLEY. How would it be washed up, and we after looking each day for nine days, and a strong wind blowing a while back from the west and south?

MAURYA. If it isn't found itself, that wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up against the moon, and it rising in the night. If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses, you had itself, what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only.

BARTLEY [*working at the halter, to CATHLEEN*]. Let you go 90 down each day, and see the sheep aren't jumping in

on the rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going.

MAURYA. How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?

BARTLEY [*to CATHLEEN*]. If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon let you and Nora get up weed enough for another cock for the kelp. It's hard set we'll be from this day with no one in it but one man to work.

100

MAURYA. It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drowned with the rest. What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave?

[BARTLEY *lays down the halter, takes off his old coat, and puts on a newer one of the same flannel.*]

BARTLEY [*to NORA*]. Is she coming to the pier?

NORA [*looking out*]. She's passing the green head and letting fall her sails.

BARTLEY [*getting his purse and tobacco*]. I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the 110 wind is bad.

MAURYA [*turning round to the fire and putting the shawl over her head*]. Isn't it a hard and cruel man won't hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

CATHLEEN. It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?

BARTLEY [*taking the halter*]. I must go now quickly. I'll

ride down on the red mare, and the grey pony'll run ¹²⁰ behind me. . . . The blessing of God on you. [*He goes out.*

MAURYA [*crying out as he is in the door*]. He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.

CATHLEEN. Why wouldn't you give him your blessing and he looking round in the door? Isn't it sorrow enough is on everyone in this house without your sending him out with an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear? ¹³⁰

[*MAURYA takes up the tongs and begins raking the fire aimlessly without looking round.*

NORA [*turning towards her*]. You're taking away the turf from the cake.

CATHLEEN [*crying out*]. The Son of God forgive us, Nora, we're after forgetting his bit of bread.

[*She comes over to the fire.*

NORA. And it's destroyed he'll be going till dark night, and he after eating nothing since the sun went up.

CATHLEEN [*turning the cake out of the oven*]. It's destroyed he'll be, surely. There's no sense left on any person in a house where an old woman will be talking for ever.

[*MAURYA sways herself on her stool.*

CATHLEEN [*cutting off some of the bread and rolling it in a ¹⁴⁰ cloth; to MAURYA*]. Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing. You'll see him then and the dark word will be broken, and you can say 'God speed you,' the way he'll be easy in his mind.

MAURYA [*taking the bread*]. Will I be in it as soon as himself?

CATHLEEN. If you go now quickly.

MAURYA [*standing up unsteadily*]. It's hard set I am to walk.

CATHLEEN [*looking at her anxiously*]. Give her the stick, 150
Nora, or maybe she'll slip on the big stones.

NORA. What stick?

CATHLEEN. The stick Michael brought from Conne-
mara.

MAURYA [*taking a stick NORA gives her*]. In the big world
the old people do be leaving things after them for their
sons and children, but in this place it is the young
men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old.

[*She goes out slowly. NORA goes over to the ladder.*]

CATHLEEN. Wait, Nora, maybe she'd turn back quickly.
She's that sorry, God help her, you wouldn't know the 160
thing she'd do.

NORA. Is she gone round by the bush?

CATHLEEN [*looking out*]. She's gone now. Throw it down
quickly, for the Lord knows when she'll be out of it
again.

NORA [*getting the bundle from the loft*]. The young priest
said he'd be passing to-morrow, and we might go down
and speak to him below if it's Michael's they are
surely.

CATHLEEN [*taking the bundle*]. Did he say what way they 170
were found?

NORA [*coming down*]. 'There were two men,' says he,
'and they rowing round with poteen before the cocks
crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body,
and they passing the black cliffs of the north.'

CATHLEEN [*trying to open the bundle*]. Give me a knife, Nora; the string's perished with the salt water, and there's a black knot on it you wouldn't loosen in a week.

NORA [*giving her a knife*]. I've heard tell it was a long 180 way to Donegal.

CATHLEEN [*cutting the string*]. It is surely. There was a man in here a while ago—the man sold us that knife—and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be in seven days you'd be in Donegal.

NORA. And what time would a man take, and he floating?

[CATHLEEN *opens the bundle and takes out a bit of a shirt and a stocking. They look at them eagerly.*

CATHLEEN [*in a low voice*]. The Lord spare us, Nora! isn't it a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely?

190

NORA. I'll get his shirt off the hook the way we can put the one flannel on the other. [*She looks through some clothes hanging in the corner.*] It's not with them, Cathleen, and where will it be?

CATHLEEN. I'm thinking Bartley put it on him in the morning, for his own shirt was heavy with the salt in it. [*Pointing to the corner.*] There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff. Give me that and it will do. [NORA *brings it to her and they compare the flannel.*] It's the same stuff, Nora; but if it is itself aren't there great rolls of 200 it in the shops of Galway, and isn't it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?

NORA [*who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out*]. It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael; God

spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea?

CATHLEEN [*taking the stocking*]. It's a plain stocking.

NORA. It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and I put up three-score stitches, and I dropped four of them.

210

CATHLEEN [*counts the stitches*]. It's that number is in it [*crying out*]. Ah, Nora, isn't it a bitter thing to think of him floating that way to the far north, and no one to keen him but the black hags that do be flying on the sea?

NORA [*swinging herself half round, and throwing out her arms on the clothes*]. And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is nothing left of a man who was a great rower and fisher but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking?

CATHLEEN [*after an instant*]. Tell me is herself coming, 220
Nora? I hear a little sound on the path.

NORA [*looking out*]. She is, Cathleen. She's coming up to the door.

CATHLEEN. Put these things away before she'll come in. Maybe it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea.

NORA [*helping CATHLEEN to close the bundle*]. We'll put them here in the corner.

[*They put them into a hole in the chimney corner.*

CATHLEEN goes back to the spinning-wheel.

NORA. Will she see it was crying I was?

230

CATHLEEN. Keep your back to the door the way the light'll not be on you,

[NORA sits down at the chimney corner, with her back to the door. MAURYA comes in very slowly, without looking at the girls, and goes over to her stool at the other side of the fire. The cloth with the bread is still in her hand. The girls look at each other, and NORA points to the bundle of bread.]

CATHLEEN [after spinning for a moment]. You didn't give him his bit of bread?

[MAURYA begins to keen softly, without turning round.]

CATHLEEN. Did you see him riding down?

[MAURYA goes on keening.]

CATHLEEN [a little impatiently]. God forgive you; isn't it a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you seen, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's done? Did you see Bartley, I'm saying to you?

MAURYA [with a weak voice]. My heart's broken from 240 this day.

CATHLEEN [as before]. Did you see Bartley?

MAURYA. I seen the fearfulest thing.

CATHLEEN [leaves her wheel and looks out]. God forgive you; he's riding the mare now over the green head, and the grey pony behind him.

MAURYA [starts, so that her shawl falls back from her head and shows her white tossed hair. With a frightened voice]. The grey pony behind him . . .

CATHLEEN [coming to the fire]. What is it ails you at all? 250

MAURYA [speaking very slowly]. I've seen the fearfulest thing any person has seen since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with the child in his arms.

CATHLEEN and NORA. Uah.

[They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire.]

NORA. Tell us what it is you seen.

MAURYA. I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the grey pony behind him [*she puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes*]. The Son of God spare us, Nora! 260

CATHLEEN. What is it you seen.

MAURYA. I seen Michael himself.

CATHLEEN [*speaking softly*]. You did not, mother. It wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial, by the grace of God.

MAURYA [*a little defiantly*]. I'm after seeing him this day, and he riding and galloping. Bartley came first on the red mare, and I tried to say 'God speed you,' but something choked the words in my throat. He went 270 by quickly; and 'the blessing of God on you,' says he, and I could say nothing. I looked up then, and I crying, at the grey pony, and there was Michael upon it—with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet.

CATHLEEN [*begins to keen*]. It's destroyed we are from this day. It's destroyed, surely.

NORA. Didn't the young priest say the Almighty God won't leave her destitute with no son living?

MAURYA [*in a low voice, but clearly*]. It's little the like of him knows of the sea. . . . Bartley will be lost now, and 280 let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them. I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house—six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the

world—and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now the lot of them. . . . There were Stephen and Shawn were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them 290 on one plank, and in by that door.

[She pauses for a moment, the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them.]

NORA *[in a whisper]*. Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the north-east?

CATHLEEN *[in a whisper]*. There's some one after crying out by the seashore.

MAURYA *[continues without hearing anything]*. There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curragh that was turned 300 over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it—it was a dry day, Nora—and leaving a track to the door.

[She pauses again with her hand stretched out towards the door. It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads.]

MAURYA *[half in a dream, to CATHLEEN]*. Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

CATHLEEN. Michael is after being found in the far north, and when he is found there how could he be here in this place?

MAURYA. There does be a power of young men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was in it.

CATHLEEN. It's Michael, God spare him, for they're 320 after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north.

[She reaches out and hands MAURYA the clothes that belonged to MICHAEL. MAURYA stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands. NORA looks out.]

NORA. They're carrying a thing among them, and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

CATHLEEN *[in a whisper to the women who have come in]*. Is it Bartley it is?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. It is, surely, God rest his soul.

[Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of BARTLEY, laid on a plank, with a bit of a sail over it, and lay it on the table.]

CATHLEEN *[to the women as they are doing so]*. What way was he drowned?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. The grey pony knocked him over 330 into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

[MAURYA has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table. The women are keening softly and swaying]

themselves with a slow movement. CATHLEEN and NORA kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel near the door.

MAURYA [*raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her*]. They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and 340 getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. [*To NORA*]. Give me the Holy Water, Nora; there's a small sup still on the dresser.

[*NORA gives it to her.*]

MAURYA [*drops MICHAEL's clothes across BARTLEY's feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him*]. It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time, surely. It's a great 350 rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

[*She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath.*]

CATHLEEN [*to an old man*]. Maybe yourself and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises. We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have a new cake you can eat while you'll be working.

THE OLD MAN [*looking at the boards*]. Are there nails with them?

360

CATHLEEN. There are not, Colum; we didn't think of the nails.

ANOTHER MAN. It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already.

CATHLEEN. It's getting old she is, and broken.

[MAURYA *stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of MICHAEL's clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water.*

NORA [*in a whisper to CATHLEEN*]. She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would anyone have thought that?

370

CATHLEEN [*slowly and clearly*]. An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

MAURYA [*puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on BARTLEY's feet*]. They're all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn [*bending her head*]; and may 380 He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one is left living in the world.

[*She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away.*

MAURYA [*continuing*]. Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley

will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.

[She kneels down again and the curtain falls slowly.]

MAURICE BARING

Catherine Parr

OR

Alexander's Horse

MAURICE BARING (Wing Commander the Hon.): born in 1874. Son of the First Lord Revelstoke. Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. Diplomat, war correspondent, intelligence officer, airman, poet, novelist, and playwright, he has written much in prose and verse, and always with distinction. *Catherine Parr* is the first of twenty-five one-act plays published in 1910 under the title of *Diminutive Dramas*.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

KING HENRY VIII.

CATHERINE PARR.

A Page.

SCENE. *London. Breakfast chamber in the Palace.* KING HENRY VIII and CATHERINE PARR are discovered sitting opposite to each other at the breakfast table. The KING has just cracked a boiled egg.

KING HENRY. My egg's raw. It really is too bad.

CATHERINE. Yesterday you complained of their being hard.

KING HENRY. And so they were. I don't want a hard egg, and I don't want a raw egg. I want them to be cooked just right.

CATHERINE. You are very difficult to please. The egg was in boiling water for three minutes and a half. I boiled it myself. But give it me. I like them like that. I will boil you another.

KING HENRY. No, it's too late now. But it is a fact that you have no idea how to boil an egg. I wish you'd let them do them in the kitchen.

CATHERINE. If they're done in the kitchen you complain because they're not here when you come down, and if they are here, you say they're cold.

KING HENRY. I never say anything of the kind. The cook boils eggs beautifully.

CATHERINE. She shall boil them to-morrow.

KING HENRY. One would have thought that a woman ²⁰ of your experience might at least know how to boil an egg. I hate a watery egg. [*Pensively.*] Poor dear Katie used to boil eggs beautifully.

CATHERINE. Do you mean Catherine Howard or Katharine of Aragon?

KING HENRY. I was alluding to poor, dear, misguided Katie Howard. Katharine of Aragon never was my wife. The marriage was not valid.

CATHERINE. Well, Catherine Howard ought to have known how to boil eggs, considering her mother was ³⁰ a kitchenmaid.

KING HENRY. That is utterly untrue. Her mother was a Rochford.

CATHERINE. You're thinking of Anne Bullen.

KING HENRY. Yes, yes, to be sure, Katie's mother was a Somerset.

CATHERINE. You're thinking of Jane Seymour.

KING HENRY. Not at all. Jane Seymour was a sister of Somerset's.

CATHERINE. All I know is that Catherine Howard's ⁴⁰ mother was a kitchenmaid. And I think it's very

unkind of you to mention her to me. I suppose you mean that you wish she were alive, and that you loved her better than you love me.

KING HENRY. I never said anything of the kind. All I said was that she knew how to boil eggs.

CATHERINE. You clearly meant to say that she had all the qualities which I lack.

KING HENRY. You are most unfair. I never meant to hint at any such thing. All I said was that I hate a watery egg, and my egg this morning was raw.

CATHERINE [*rising and going to the door in a temper*]. Well, the best thing you can do is to get rid of me, and to marry some one who knows how to boil an egg.

KING HENRY. Catherine, come back! I really didn't mean to offend you. You know how to boil eggs very well.

CATHERINE [*sitting down*]. One takes an endless amount of trouble and that's all the thanks one gets. Don't think that I shall ever boil your eggs for you again, because I shan't.

KING HENRY. I was thinking we might have a little music this morning. I have composed a new ballad which I should like to try over with you. It's for viol, and lute and voice. We might try it.

CATHERINE. I'm not sure if I have time. What is it called?

KING HENRY. It's called 'The Triumph of Love', and it begins:

Come list to Alexander's deed,
Great Jove's immortal son,
Who, riding on a snow-white steed,
To Babylon did come.

CATHERINE. 'Son' doesn't rhyme with 'come'.

KING HENRY. It's not meant to. It's assonance.

CATHERINE. Do you mean Alexander the Great?

KING HENRY. Yes, of course.

CATHERINE. The only thing is, his horse was black.

KING HENRY. No, my dear, you're mistaken; his horse was white.

80

CATHERINE. Black—black as jet.

KING HENRY. But I know for a fact it was white.

CATHERINE. Alexander's horse was black. Everybody knows it was black.

KING HENRY. It was white. You can ask anyone you like.

CATHERINE. It was black. He was famous for his black horse. There are hundreds of pictures of him on his *black* horse—my father has got one.

KING HENRY. Then the painter made a mistake. 90
Plutarch, Xenophon, Aristotle all mention his *white* horse.

CATHERINE. Black.

KING HENRY. But, my dear, how obstinate you are!
I *know* it is white——

CATHERINE. Black, *coal*-black.

KING HENRY. Have you read Xenophon?

CATHERINE. You are thinking of something else. Even when we were children my father always showed us the picture of Alexander's *black* horse.

100

KING HENRY. Well, I can easily prove it to you. There's

a Plutarch here in the bookcase. [*He goes to the bookcase and takes out a book.*]

CATHERINE. I remember it particularly well because my brother had a black horse and we called it 'Bucephalus', after Alexander's *black* horse.

KING HENRY [*turning over the leaves of the book*]. If it had been black it would never have been called Bucephalus—it would be absurd to call a black horse Bucephalus.

CATHERINE. Not so absurd as calling a white horse Bucephalus.

110

KING HENRY. He would never have chosen a black horse. He was superstitious——

CATHERINE. Just because you're superstitious and believe in Saints, and worship images, you think every one else is. As a matter of fact, he chose a black horse on purpose to show he didn't care a pin about superstitions——

KING HENRY. Here it is—'*χαλεπὸς εἶναι καὶ κομιδῇ δύσχρηστος*'—'The horse was wild and extremely difficult to manage.' In fact, he had all the characteristics 120 of the white Thessalian horses of that day.

CATHERINE. But it doesn't say it was white. And Thessalian horses are famous for being black.

KING HENRY. You really are too obstinate for words. I will find you the proofs in Xenophon. It is distinctly stated that the horse is *white*. It is an historical fact. Nobody has ever disputed it.

CATHERINE. But Plutarch, you see, practically says it was black.

KING HENRY. Plutarch says nothing of the kind. Besides, 130
I now remember talking about this with Wolsey, who

was an excellent scholar. I distinctly remember his saying one day: 'As white as Bucephalus.' It's quite a common phrase among scholars.

CATHERINE. He must have said, 'As black as Bucephalus.'

KING HENRY. Of course, if you mean to say I tell lies——

CATHERINE. I don't mean that you tell lies, but you are mistaken—that's all.

140

KING HENRY. But I tell you that there is no mistake possible. I know it as well as I know my own name.

CATHERINE. Your memory plays you tricks. Just now you couldn't remember Catherine Howard's mother's name.

KING HENRY. That's nothing to do with it. Besides, I did remember it. I made a slip, that's all. But this is an historical fact which I've known all my life.

CATHERINE. I quite understand your memory failing you. You have so many names to remember. I expect 150 you were confusing Alexander's black horse with King Alfred's white horse—the white horse of Wantage.

KING HENRY. Good gracious! If you had a smattering of education you wouldn't say such things! It comes of having no religion and no education, and of not knowing Latin. A Lutheran education is worse than none. Even Anne of Cleves knew Latin.

CATHERINE. Thank Heavens, I don't know Latin! Stupid, superstitious language, fit only for bigots and monks!

160

KING HENRY. I suppose you mean I am a bigot.

CATHERINE. You can turn what one says into meaning anything you like. As a matter of fact, all I said was that the horse was black.

KING HENRY. I'd rather be a bigot than a Lutheran heretic.

CATHERINE. You know you're wrong and you try to escape the point. That's just like a Tudor. No Tudor could ever listen to reason.

KING HENRY. I must ask you not to insult my family. 170

CATHERINE. You've insulted mine, which is a far older one. My family has no blood on its escutcheon.

KING HENRY. I won't stand this any longer. [*He gets up, opens the door, and calls.*] Denny, Butts, Page, who is there?

Enter a PAGE.

PAGE. Your Majesty.

KING HENRY. Go and tell the Lord Chamberlain to make the necessary arrangements for transporting the Ex-Queen to the Tower.

PAGE [*puzzled*]. Yes, your Majesty. Does your Majesty 180 mean the late Queen's remains?"

KING HENRY. I said the *Ex-Queen*, you stupid boy—Queen Catherine Parr.

PAGE. Yes, your Majesty.

KING HENRY. And tell him to give orders to the Governor of the Tower to have everything ready for the Ex-Queen's execution.

PAGE. Is the same ceremonial to be observed as in the case of Queen Catherine Howard, your Majesty?

KING HENRY. Yes; only there need only be one roll of 190 drums instead of two—at the end. [*The PAGE goes to the door.*] And on the way ask Dr. Butts whether Alexander the Great's horse was black or white.

CATHERINE. It was black. [*The PAGE bows and goes out.*] Well, since I'm to be executed, I daresay you will allow me to go and pack up my things. By the way, you left your lute in my sitting-room yesterday. I will bring it down.

KING HENRY. Wait a minute, there's no hurry.

CATHERINE. I beg your pardon, I have very little time, 200 and a great many letters to write.

KING HENRY [*hesitating*]. And I wanted to have some music.

CATHERINE. You don't expect me to accompany you now, I suppose? You had better find some one else. I have got other things to think about during my last moments on earth.

KING HENRY [*laughing uneasily*]. I was only joking, of course, my dear. You don't mean to say you took it seriously.

210

CATHERINE. I am afraid I don't appreciate that kind of joke.

KING HENRY. Come, come; let bygones be bygones, and let us have some music. I want to play you my ballad.

Enter the PAGE.

PAGE. If you please, your Majesty, I can't find the Lord Chamberlain, and Dr. Butts says your Majesty was quite correct as to the colour of Alexander the Great's horse.

KING HENRY [*beaming*]. Very good; you can go. You need not deliver the message to the Lord Chamberlain. [*The PAGE bows and retires.*] And now, my dear, we'll go and play. You see, I knew I was right.

[*The KING opens the door with a bow.*

CATHERINE. It was black, all the same.

KING HENRY [*indulgently, as if speaking to a child*]. Yes, yes, my dear, of course it was black, but let's go and have some music. [*They go out.*

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

Royal Favour

LAURENCE HOUSMAN: born in 1865. Author of numerous essays, plays, novels, poems, and romantic fantasies. His range is wide, as may be seen by contrasting, for example, *Little Plays of St. Francis* with *Victoria Regina*. The finely satirical scene between the Queen, Prince Albert, the Prince of Wales, Dr. Stanley, Mr. Disraeli, and Mr. Martin Tupper was not among those put on the stage at the Lyric Theatre in 1938.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

QUEEN VICTORIA.

LADY AUGUSTA, *Lady-in-Waiting*.

DR. STANLEY.

ALBERT, *the Prince Consort*.

THE PRINCE OF WALES.

MR. MARTIN TUPPER.

MR. DISRAELI.

An Usher.

A Footman.

1859

Into one of the spacious apartments at Windsor Castle the morning sun streams through a high window. In the light of it, tempered by blinds, sits QUEEN VICTORIA. One of her Ladies is now reading the regulation portion of the morning Scripture.

LADY-IN-WAITING. Proverbs, the twenty-sixth, Ma'am. . . . 'As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for fools. A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back. Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like him. As the legs of the lame are unequal, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools. As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool.'

[The door opens, and DR. STANLEY is ceremoniously announced. Still young and pleasant-looking, not yet a Dean, he steps easily into the Royal Presence, and the obeisance he makes, though correct in form, is a friendly one. As he advances to bow over the hand graciously extended, he manages to give a glance of happy recognition to the Queen's Lady, who, when THE QUEEN rises, rises also. For this is LADY AUGUSTA BRUCE, destined presently to become his wife; and perhaps they already know it.]

THE QUEEN. Oh, good morning, Dr. Stanley. How very good of you to come, and so punctually! I wanted you to be here this morning.

STANLEY. If in any way I can serve your Majesty, I shall be only too happy.

THE QUEEN. You are always so kind. And here was Lady Augusta, also looking forward to seeing you. *[Thus graciously permitted, DR. STANLEY and LADY AUGUSTA press hands.]* But to-day I did rather especially need you, for more reasons than one.

STANLEY. Then I am specially fortunate, Ma'am. May I enquire? . . .

THE QUEEN. Oh, yes. Do, please, sit down; both of you. You see, Dr. Stanley, I and the Prince have always felt that we ought—as far as we could—to encourage our distinguished men of literature. But there is always this difficulty. It is quite impossible to have at my Court, in the ordinary way, those with whom I cannot take the lead . . . intellectually, I mean, in conversation. I can, of course, make certain exceptions. Mr.

Tennyson comes to see me sometimes; and though I have not read many of his poems myself, he reads them to me; so conversation becomes unnecessary. 30

STANLEY. And does your Majesty enjoy the readings?

THE QUEEN. Oh, yes; for even without understanding the poems, one can praise his reading of them. He has a beautiful voice; and he is so picturesque—so like a poet, is he not?

STANLEY. He is indeed, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. Besides, he really is, I suppose, a great poet.

STANLEY. A very great poet, Ma'am. I might even say that your Majesty is unusually fortunate in having such a poet for Laureate. 40

THE QUEEN. I am so glad to hear you say so. There was just a question of offering the post to Lord Macaulay, whose *Lays of Ancient Rome* are certainly the finest poetry I know. But it was thought that would perhaps be too political an appointment. Mr. Tennyson, I understand, has no politics.

STANLEY. None that I know of, Ma'am; or not so well as I know his poetry.

THE QUEEN. No? Well, that is why Lord Macaulay was not chosen as I expected. 50

STANLEY. The reason against it was sufficiently good, Ma'am. The alternative it led to was even better.

THE QUEEN. Yes? Well, that was really settled for us by the Prime Minister. But often since, in other cases, it has been a great regret that one could not pay all the attention one would like—by commanding their attendance at Court—to those who, outside politics, have become eminent in literature.

STANLEY. But at your Majesty's call, one meets certain eminent writers . . . Churchmen amongst others. 60

THE QUEEN. Of course some of the Bishops have written books, I know. But it is as Bishops, not authors, that they come here. And of course, being Head of the Church, I feel myself their equal, though we don't talk theology. . . . Nor have we any difficulty about artists. Their minds are not remarkable in thought or conversation; they are quite quiet and modest, I mean—waiting until they are spoken to. Sir Edwin Landseer, for instance, is a great artist, one of the greatest of all ages; but when he talks, he is just like anyone else— 70 quite modest and pleasant. And he does not mind his work being criticized; though, I believe, he knows more about dogs than I do.

STANLEY. In that case, Ma'am, he must be a very great authority. Yet you don't feel any difficulty about him?

THE QUEEN. Oh, no! About dogs I don't mind. Books are different. If I am to meet an author, I feel I must have read one of his books, at least, and been able to understand it. And as I really have not time for doing so, that is one of the reasons why I cannot—except on 80 very special occasions—have authors coming to my Court.

STANLEY. And yet, Ma'am, I myself am an author.

THE QUEEN. Oh, yes, Dr. Stanley; but you are not the kind of author I mean. Besides, on so many things we have the same opinions. But I really am dreadfully nervous this morning; for a really great writer—and a very famous one—is coming to see us. The Prince thought that we really ought to ask him.

STANLEY. And may I be informed, Ma'am, who it is 90

that your Majesty is about to honour in so very special a——

[*The interrogation is interrupted by the entry of the PRINCE CONSORT. DR. STANLEY rises, and bows low.*

THE QUEEN. Oh, here is the Prince. It must be nearly time, then.

ALBERT. How do you do, Dr. Stanley? We are very pleased to see you. Has the Queen told you about the plans we are making, in which we shall need your assistance?

STANLEY. Her Majesty did tell me that you were expecting somebody. 100

THE QUEEN [*interrupting*]. Oh, no; I haven't told him anything yet, Albert, about *that*. I was leaving it till you came. Where is Bertie?

ALBERT. He is here, waiting within call. I told him not to come in yet.

THE QUEEN. It is about our son, the Prince of Wales, Dr. Stanley, that we wished to consult you.

ALBERT. Yes, my Dear; but this will hardly interest Lady Augusta, if Lady Augusta does not mind.

THE QUEEN. Oh, of course not. Lady Augusta, you 110 may go; and take those letters with you.

[*LADY AUGUSTA, who has stood since the PRINCE'S entry, curtsies, and retires. DR. STANLEY opens the door for her.*

ALBERT. Yes, Dr. Stanley, the Prince is now eighteen—a difficult age.

STANLEY. Yes, Sir, as those who have lived through it know.

ALBERT. I lived through it without any difficulty, Dr. Stanley.

STANLEY. Then your Highness was a happy exception.

THE QUEEN. Of course he was, Dr. Stanley. [*Aside.*]
'Albert, may not Dr. Stanley sit down? 120

ALBERT [*coldly*]. If you wish him to, my Dear.

THE QUEEN [*submissively*]. Oh, no.

[*The PRINCE CONSORT seats himself. DR. STANLEY remains standing.*]

Well, it is about that . . . about the Prince, that we wished to have your advice, Dr. Stanley.

ALBERT. Your help, that is to say.

THE QUEEN. We think that perhaps next year he ought to go abroad, and see things for himself a little more.

But we have to be so very careful whom he goes with.

STANLEY. Of course, Ma'am, naturally.

ALBERT. We have decided, Dr. Stanley, that it must be 130
with someone not too old to take a share in his interests and pursuits, but at the same time one whom we can trust to exercise a certain amount of discipline and control—and, when necessary, to insist on securing obedience.

STANLEY. A difficult task, Sir, when two are travelling abroad together—the two alone.

ALBERT. A difficult task, as you say. It is for that reason that we ask you to undertake it.

STANLEY. But, indeed, Sir, I— 140

ALBERT. There is no one else in whom we can place such complete trust and confidence as yourself. You have the qualifications, and the gifts. Though so much

his senior, the Prince will come to look upon you as his friend.

STANLEY. I am very reluctant, Sir.

ALBERT. That is understandable. You are probably aware that the Prince has already become a difficulty. He has now been at the University for his first term. . . . It has been indicated to us that College life does ¹⁵⁰ not suit him, and that he had better leave as soon as other arrangements can be made. That is the position, Dr. Stanley, in which we come to you for help.

STANLEY. Sir, I feel quite at a loss why I should have been chosen.

THE QUEEN. Oh, surely, Dr. Stanley, you will not say 'no' to me.

STANLEY. If it is, indeed, your Majesty's fixed wish, then I can say no more.

ALBERT. Ah, very good! That is settled, then. [*The* ¹⁶⁰ PRINCE CONSORT *goes to the door, opens it, and calls through.*] Bertie! Are you there? You may come in. [THE PRINCE OF WALES *enters. He stands, shy and sullen, and does not advance.*] Come on in . . . and shut the door! [*The PRINCE shuts it.*] Don't stand there! Here is Dr. Stanley waiting for you to speak to him.

THE PRINCE OF WALES [*perfunctorily*]. How do you do?

STANLEY. How do *you* do, Sir? How did your Royal Highness like Cambridge?

PRINCE. Hated it.

ALBERT. Then you won't have to hate it much longer, Sir. Next year we are sending you abroad; and Dr. ¹⁷⁰ Stanley goes with you.

PRINCE. I don't want to go abroad—with anybody.

ALBERT. That is not for you to decide. We have decided it for you; and Dr. Stanley has most kindly consented to take charge of you. Now, what do you say to that?

PRINCE. As I'm not to say anything, there's nothing for me to say.

THE QUEEN. Bertie! Speaking to your Father like that!

PRINCE. Well, what *am* I to say?

ALBERT. You might, at least, say "Thank you" to Dr. Stanley. 180

PRINCE [*sullenly*]. Thank you.

STANLEY. Oh . . . pray, don't mention it!

[*There is a pause.*]

PRINCE. Can I go now?

ALBERT. No, Sir, you may *not* go. Wait here, and have your mind improved a little. We are expecting a visit from a very eminent man of letters; you will never have heard of him, of course. Well, stay and listen to him.

PRINCE. I shan't understand a word he says.

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ALBERT. I dare say not. . . .

PRINCE [*sotto voce*]. . . . And shan't want to!

ALBERT [*following on*]. But you can, at least, try. And, while in the presence of others, you might also try to look a little less of an injured martyr.

PRINCE. Well, I can't pretend to look pleased, when I'm not.

[*A Gentleman of the Court enters, and, seeing THE QUEEN engaged in conversation with DR. STANLEY, goes and delivers his message to the PRINCE CONSORT.*]

THE QUEEN. You must not mind, Dr. Stanley, if just at

first there is this little unwillingness. Bertie so dislikes having to make up his mind about anything. 200

ALBERT. Yes, Her Majesty is ready to receive him.

[The Gentleman bows and retires.]

STANLEY. I must confess, Ma'am, that the unwillingness was shared by your most humble servant. I might even say that, in each case, our minds have been made up for us. So, naturally, there is at first a little difficulty in getting used to the prospect.

ALBERT. Our expected visitor is due, my Dear. I said that you would receive him as soon as he arrived.

THE QUEEN. Yes, I hope he will be punctual.

[As she speaks, the clock on the mantelpiece strikes the hour.]

STANLEY *[with a gesture towards the PRINCE, who stands moodily looking out of the window]*. Would it not be well, 210 Ma'am, to begin our better acquaintance now? May I go and speak to him?

THE QUEEN. Oh, do, Dr. Stanley, do! It is very kind of you.

ALBERT. I think I hear him coming.

THE QUEEN. Oh, Albert, this is going to be very difficult. You must do all the talking, please.

ALBERT. We have Dr. Stanley to help us, my Dear. It will be all right.

[The door opens; an USHER enters followed by the much expected Celebrity.]

USHER. If it please your Majesty, Mr. Martin Tupper. 220

[MR. MARTIN TUPPER bows himself in with more bows than the three which etiquette requires. He bows to everyone as long as time is left to him for bowing.]

THE QUEEN [*rising*]. How do you do, Mr. Tupper?

ALBERT. How do you do?

[MR. TUPPER *reverentially touches the Royal hands, and says in a voice sonorous with emotion.*

TUPPER. So honoured, your Majesty! Your Royal Highness, so honoured!

THE QUEEN. We are so pleased to meet you, Mr. Tupper.

ALBERT. Having often heard of you . . . having also read you.

TUPPER. Ah, Sir, that is, indeed, for a writer, the reward of rewards—to be read!

ALBERT. Bertie, come and shake hands with Mr. Tupper. Mr. Tupper, this is my Son, the Prince of Wales.

PRINCE [*getting it over*]. How do you do?

TUPPER. How do you do, Sir. . . . Most honoured!

THE QUEEN. Dr. Stanley, you and Mr. Tupper already know each other, I expect?

STANLEY [*bowing*]. I have not had the honour.

TUPPER. The honour is mine, Sir.

[*There is a slight pause. THE PRINCE OF WALES draws furtively away. Presently he stands by the window and takes up a book, turning its pages, merely to pass the time.*

ALBERT. Mr. Tupper, I was reading one of your books to Her Majesty, only last night.

THE QUEEN. Yes, and I enjoyed it—very much. THE

TUPPER. May I be allowed, Sir, to ask which?

ALBERT. Your *Proverbial Philosophy*, Mr. Tupper.

TUPPER. Ah! then your Majesty would, I am sure.

THE QUEEN. Yes; there are so many things in it with which I so thoroughly agree.

TUPPER [*enthusiastically*]. Thousands and thousands of your Majesty's loyal subjects have done the same, Ma'am. That book, I am proud to tell your Majesty, has already gone into fifteen editions—large ones. 250

ALBERT. How many editions, Mr. Tupper?

TUPPER. Fifteen, your Royal Highness.

ALBERT. Oh, I thought you said fifty. . . . I could have wished it had been fifty.

TUPPER. It will be fifty, some day, your Royal Highness, I don't doubt. The sales never diminish, Ma'am, never. That book, your Majesty, brings me in a steady income every year.

THE QUEEN. How very gratifying for you; and how satisfactory for the publishers. 260

TUPPER. Satisfactory for the publishers, you say, Ma'am? Alas, still more satisfactory for the pirates!

THE QUEEN. The pirates?

TUPPER [*with emotion*]. Millions of my books, your Majesty—complete editions—have been stolen from me by American pirates across the sea. And they call it the Land of Liberty.

THE QUEEN. American pirates! I did not think such things still existed. Most extraordinary!

STANLEY. Mr. Tupper is speaking of book-pirates, your Majesty—a product of the American copyright laws. It involves not loss of life; only loss of property.

THE QUEEN. Still, that is very wrong.

TUPPER. Most wrong, your Majesty. My book, *Proverbial Philosophy*, has been translated into sixteen languages throughout the world. And in every country it has been honestly paid for, except in America. And they call themselves a civilised nation! Your Majesty must pardon me if I let my indignation carry me away.

THE QUEEN. But what you say is so interesting, Mr. 280
Tupper. And I can share your indignation over a thing like that. I can quite understand it.

TUPPER. Your Majesty is very good to say so. It consoles me, nay more, it makes up for the monetary loss it has been to me, that I have your Majesty's kind sympathy. [There is a pause.]

ALBERT. How do you write your books, Mr. Tupper?

TUPPER. How do I write them, Sir?—In what way?

ALBERT. Precisely, 'In what way?' Do you write them slowly, with difficulty; or do they arise naturally and 290
spontaneously to your mind, without effort?

TUPPER. Oh, they come very quickly, your Royal Highness, very quickly indeed! I would not say without any effort of a kind—without strain. Emotional strain on the nervous system there must be, of course. But no delay in the actual expression—or the choice of words. They come entirely as they like. Sometimes I see them there on the paper before me, almost without having become aware that I had written them.

PRINCE [*sotto voce*]. Good Lord! What an ass! 300

THE QUEEN. How very interesting. Most extraordinary!

TUPPER. Yes, your Majesty, I have to admit that it is extraordinary. But that is what being a writer of free,

spontaneous verse—the form in which it comes to me—must necessarily mean.

ALBERT. Indeed? Most interesting. . . . Well, I am sure you have given us a great deal to think about, Mr. Tupper. And if we had time for a longer conversation, we should learn more. Perhaps, on some other occasion—

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[This is a covert indication to THE QUEEN that the time for terminating the interview has arrived. She rises.]

THE QUEEN. Mr. Tupper, before you go, will you sign your book for us?

TUPPER. Oh, your Majesty! let me not only sign it, but let me inscribe in it a few lines of impromptu verse, inspired by the occasion!

THE QUEEN. Do . . . please! We should value it greatly. Where is the book, Albert?

ALBERT. Why, there is Bertie reading it!

[At that moment the PRINCE is cursorily reading it. As though detected in an act of guilt, he puts it down hurriedly.]

ALBERT. Bertie, let Mr. Tupper have his book for a moment. You will find pen and ink at that table, 320 Mr. Tupper.

TUPPER. I thank your Royal Highness. I shall not be a moment.

[He goes across to the table, takes up the book, and opens it at the fly-leaf.]

THE QUEEN *[seating herself again]*. Would you like us to be silent, Mr. Tupper, while you are composing the lines?

TUPPER. No, no! Oh, no, your Majesty! Pray do not think of it. When the Muse inspires me, I am so

carried away that I hear nothing, I assure you. Would your Majesty believe, now, that I wrote one of my best poems while a Punch-and-Judyshow was perform- 330
ing under my very window?

PRINCE [*sotto voce*]. I would!

THE QUEEN. How extraordinary! And you were able to finish it, Mr. Tupper?

TUPPER. I was, Ma'am.

PRINCE. But you *did* hear it?

TUPPER. Hear it? . . . Hear what, your Royal Highness?

PRINCE. The Punch-and-Judy show.

TUPPER. Oh, yes; I certainly heard it.

PRINCE. Then, that time, you were not so inspired? 340

TUPPER. Oh, I see what your Highness means. No, no. The Punch-and-Judy show took longer than the inspiration. I heard the beginning of it; and I heard the end of it: but not—not while I was composing. . . . May I sit down, your Majesty, while I am writing?

THE QUEEN. Please do.

[*He sits down. . . . Inspiration descends on him.*]

ALBERT. Bertie, you had better come away over here. You shouldn't talk so much.

[*The PRINCE moves away from the writing-table, but turns, and from a distance watches the process of composition which has now begun.*]

THE QUEEN [*speaking in a low voice*]. Dr. Stanley, you will stay to lunch, will you not? Mr. Disraeli, the 350
Minister-in-Attendance, will be here. You would like to meet him. He is so interesting, so amusing.

STANLEY. Charmed, your Majesty, if I may, indeed, have the honour.

THE QUEEN. Then do.

PRINCE [*imitating 'Punch'*]. Judy! Judy!

THE QUEEN. Bertie!

ALBERT. If you can't behave yourself, you had better leave the room.

PRINCE. Very well. [*He moves to the door.* 360

ALBERT. Stay where you are! But you will take your lunch alone to-day, in your own room. [MR. TUPPER *rises from his seat.*] Ah, Mr. Tupper, have you done it all already? [MR. TUPPER *bows, book in hand.*] Then I am sure Her Majesty would like to hear it.

TUPPER. If Her Majesty will understand that it is only a very slight effort.

THE QUEEN. Please!

TUPPER. To England's Queen
This book I give, 370
That here kept green
It still may live.
From youth to age,
Whene'er you need it,
Oh, Madam, turn the page,
And read it.

THE QUEEN. Oh, thank you!

TUPPER [*with a gesture*]. Pardon, Ma'am . . . just two more lines.

And should you ever 380
Deign to quote it
Happy will be
The Heart that wrote it.

[*He lays the book down.*]

THE QUEEN. Very pretty indeed! Thank you, Mr. Tupper. [*She rises.*] We looked forward very much to meeting you, and it has been a very, very great pleasure. . . . Good-bye.

ALBERT. Good-bye, Mr. Tupper. We are glad to have had this opportunity of meeting you. Some day, I trust, we may meet again. 390

[*Over this last adieu MR. TUPPER has been unable to voice his emotion. But at the door he turns, and bows.*

TUPPER. Your Majesty's most humble, and grateful servant.

[*The door, with liveried mechanism, opens to let him out, and closes again behind him.*

THE QUEEN [*as she sits*]. How very pleasant he was, to be sure. And so well-informed.

STANLEY [*dryly*]. About his own writings? Yes, Ma'am.

THE QUEEN. He *must* be well-informed to be able to write them.

STANLEY [*assenting, in a non-committal tone*]. Oh, yes; I suppose so.

THE QUEEN. You have read his book, Dr. Stanley? 400

STANLEY. Ah, no. But I have been meaning to—now and then.

THE QUEEN. Oh, but you must! You would find things in it so useful in your sermons. Indeed they remind me of sermons a good deal . . . only put in such beautiful language.

STANLEY. Then I must, Ma'am—I must, indeed.

[*The door opens, and, with due announcement, MR. DISRAELI enters.*

THE QUEEN [*rising to meet him*]. Oh, Mr. Disraeli, I am sorry you did not come a little sooner.

DISRAELI. I am always sorry, Ma'am, not to come 410 sooner into so gracious a Presence. I am sorry when I have to leave it.

THE QUEEN. Ah, but I meant for quite a different reason, Mr. Disraeli. Had you come sooner you would have met a distinguished man of letters, like yourself.

DISRAELI. Like myself, Ma'am? To what other man of letters, in your Majesty's estimation, have I the honour of resemblance?

THE QUEEN. Oh, I only meant both being famous writers. . . . Mr. Martin Tupper. 420

DISRAELI [*becoming inscrutable*]. Ah? . . . Mr. Martin Tupper?

[Meanwhile the PRINCE CONSORT has been at the writing-table, examining the newly autographed book with apparent interest. Thus from a distance he has been able to acknowledge the entry of a Minister whom he dislikes by a mere bow. Now he comes forward and joins in the conversation.]

ALBERT. We understand that he has a great reputation.

DISRAELI. And a great circulation, Sir, to confirm it.

ALBERT. You read his books, Mr. Disraeli?

DISRAELI. I have not read them, Sir. It is an infirmity I have to confess, that to read the works of men so greatly my superior in popular esteem depresses me. I lose inspiration.

THE QUEEN. That is a pity. 430

DISRAELI. Yes, Ma'am, a great pity!

THE QUEEN. But do you not read Shakespeare, Mr. Disraeli?

DISRAELI. Oh, yes; I read Shakespeare, Ma'am. Shakespeare belongs to another age. He does not overshadow me, in popular esteem, in the same way as Mr. Martin Tupper. Of Shakespeare I have no jealousy . . . none.

THE QUEEN. But you are jealous of Mr. Tupper?

DISRAELI. Ah, Ma'am! do not probe, I beseech you, ⁴⁴⁰ the dark and secret places of the human heart. What I feel about Mr. Tupper, with your Majesty's permission, I would rather not say.

THE QUEEN. He has written some verses in his book for me; would you like to see them?

DISRAELI. Any command of your Majesty's I obey.

ALBERT. Bertie, give Mr. Disraeli the book.

[DISRAELI takes the book, and reads. THE QUEEN is watching his face; but his expression, made suitable at the beginning of the reading, does not change. He lays the book down.]

THE QUEEN. Very beautiful, don't you think?

DISRAELI. Ah, Ma'am, could I write poetry like that, not another of my own poor works would I be able to publish.

[LADY AUGUSTA re-enters.]

THE QUEEN. Dear Lady Augusta, come and talk to ⁴⁵⁰ Dr. Stanley. You will sit together at luncheon, please. Albert, I want to speak to you for a moment.

[They go to the window together; and with their backs to the others they stand talking.]

PRINCE. Mr. Disraeli, you didn't miss anything. . . . I'm glad he's gone.

DISRAELI. So am I, Sir.

PRINCE. An awful ass!

DISRAELI. I feel bound to respect your Highness's judgment.

[*And now the colloquy of THE QUEEN and the PRINCE CONSORT is over.* 460]

ALBERT. Don't you think, Mr. Disraeli, that, for the next Honours List, we might suggest to the Prime Minister, that he should submit Mr. Martin Tupper's name for inclusion?

DISRAELI. Your Highness means in the next *Birthday* Honours, I presume?

ALBERT. Why the Birthday Honours, specially?

DISRAELI. The New Year's Honours being, as a rule, more political in character.

ALBERT. Ah, yes, yes. Well, Mr. Tupper is *not* political 470—is he?

DISRAELI. He has political views, Sir. And for that reason, I must regretfully suggest, that the submission of his name should be left—to the *next* Government.

THE QUEEN. Oh, Mr. Disraeli, I am so sorry!

DISRAELI. So am I, Ma'am. But I have to repeat that the inclusion of Mr. Tupper's name in *any* Honours List would be regarded by your Majesty's present advisers—as, politically, inexpedient.

ALBERT. Now there, Mr. Disraeli, you have an instance 480 of the difficulty in which we are always finding ourselves! Her Majesty is anxious to do honour to literature. And you see, immediately, something that has nothing whatever to do with literature arises and prevents.

DISRAELI. How true, Sir! How very true! Something that has nothing whatever to do with literature arises and prevents. [*The door opens. A FOOTMAN appears.*

FOOTMAN. Your Majesty is served.

[*In due order, they go in to luncheon. THE PRINCE OF WALES, who is not to be of the company, stands back, and waits for MR. DISRAELI to pass him.*

PRINCE. Well stopped, Sir!

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[*MR. DISRAELI bows his acknowledgment; he smiles, but says nothing.*

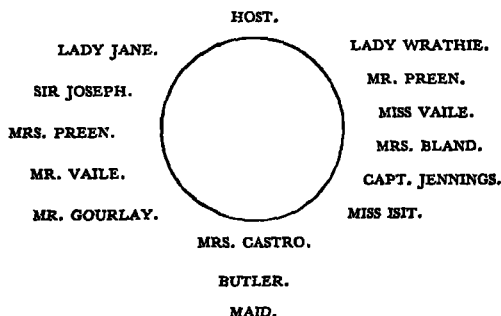
JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE

Shall we join the Ladies?

SIR JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE, Bt., O.M.: 1860-1937. Born at Kirriemuir, Angus; educated there, at Dumfries Academy, and Edinburgh University. Worked for a time on the staff of *The Nottingham Journal* and then came to London where, after a successful career as a journalist and novel-writer, he found his true vocation as a dramatist with a sequence of wistfully sentimental comedies (1895-1920). In 1936 he broke new ground in his Scriptural play, *The Boy David*, with Elizabeth Bergner in the title role, and Godfrey Tearle as Saul.

Shall We Join the Ladies?, 'a one-act enigma', was written in 1922 for performance at the opening of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art Theatre, and never completed.

For the past week the hospitable SAM SMITH has been entertaining a country house party, and we choose to raise the curtain on them towards the end of dinner. They are seated thus, the host facing us:



SMITH is a little old bachelor, and sits there beaming on his guests like an elderly cupid. So they think him, but they

are to be undeceived. Though many of them have not met until this week, they have at present that genial regard for each other which steals so becomingly over really nice people who have eaten too much.

DOLPHIN, *the butler, is passing round the fruit. The only other attendant is a maid in the background, as for an emergency, and she is as interested in the conversation as he is indifferent to it. If one of the guests were to destroy himself, DOLPHIN would merely sign to her to remove the debris while he continued to serve the fruit.*

In the midst of hilarity over some quip that we are just too late to catch, the youthful LADY JANE counts the company and is appalled.

LADY JANE. We are thirteen, Lady Wrathie.

[Many fingers count.]

LADY WRATHIE. Fourteen.

CAPT. JENNINGS. Twelve.

LADY JANE. We are thirteen.

HOST. Oh dear, how careless of me. Is there anything I can do?

SIR JOSEPH *[of the city]*. Leave this to me. All keep your seats.

MRS. PREEN *[perhaps rather thankfully]*. I am afraid Lady Jane has risen.

[LADY JANE subsides. 10]

LADY WRATHIE. Joseph, you have risen yourself.

[SIR JOSEPH subsides.]

MRS. CASTRO *[a mysterious widow from Buenos Ayres]*. Were we thirteen all those other nights?

MRS. PREEN. We always had a guest or two from outside, you remember.

MISS ISIT [*whose name obviously needs to be queried*]. All we have got to do is to make our number fourteen.

VAILE. But how, Miss Isit?

MISS ISIT. Why, Dolphin, of course.

MRS. PREEN. It's too clever of you, Miss Isit. Mr. 20
Smith, Dolphin may sit down with us, mayn't he?

MRS. CASTRO. Please, dear Mr. Smith; just for a moment.
That breaks the spell.

SIR JOSEPH. We won't eat you, Dolphin.

[*But he has crunched some similar ones.*]

HOST. Let me explain to him. You see, Dolphin, there is a superstition that if thirteen people sit down at table something staggering will happen to one of them before the night is out. That is it, isn't it?

MRS. BLAND [*darkly*]. Namely, death.

HOST [*brightly*]. Yes, namely, death. 30

LADY JANE. But not before the night is out, you dear; before the year is out.

HOST. I thought it was before the night is out.

[*DOLPHIN is reluctant.*]

GOURLAY. Sit here, Dolphin.

MISS VAILE. No, I want him.

MISS ISIT. It was my idea, and I insist on having him.

MRS. CASTRO [*moving farther to the left*]. Yes, here between us. [*DOLPHIN obliges.*]

MRS. PREEN [*with childish abandon*]. Saved.

HOST. As we are saved, and he does not seem happy, 40
may he resume his duties?

LADY WRATHIE. Yes, yes; and now we ladies may withdraw.

PREEN [*the most selfish of the company, and therefore perhaps the favourite*]. First, a glass of wine with you, Dolphin.

VAILE [*ever seeking to undermine PREEN's popularity*]. Is this wise?

PREEN [*determined to carry the thing through despite this fellow*]. To the health of our friend Dolphin.

[DOLPHIN's health having been drunk, he withdraws his chair and returns to the sideboard. As MISS ISIT and MRS. CASTRO had made room for him between them exactly opposite his master, and the space remains empty, we have now a better view of the company. Can this have been the author's object?]

SIR JOSEPH [*pleasantly detaining the ladies*]. One moment. Another toast. Fellow-guests, to-morrow morning, alas, this party has to break up, and I am sure you will all agree with me that we have had a delightful week. It has not been an eventful week; it has been too happy for that.

CAPT. JENNINGS. I rise to protest. When I came here a week ago I had never met Lady Jane. Now, as you know, we are engaged. I certainly call it an eventful week.

LADY JANE. Yes, please, Sir Joseph.

SIR JOSEPH. I stand corrected. And now we are in the last evening of it; we are drawing nigh to the end of a perfect day.

PREEN [*who is also an orator*]. In seconding this motion——

VAILE. Pooh. [*He is the perfect little gentleman, if socks and spats can do it.*]

SIR JOSEPH. Though I have known you intimately for but

a short time, I already find it impossible to call you anything but Sam Smith.

MRS. CASTRO. In our hearts, Mr. Smith, that is what we ladies call you also.

PREEN. If I might say a word——

VAILE. Tuts.

70

SIR JOSEPH. Ladies and gentlemen, is he not like a pocket edition of Mr. Pickwick?

GOURLAY [*an artist*]. Exactly. That is how I should like to paint him.

MRS. BLAND. Mr. Smith, you love, we think that if you were married you could not be quite so nice.

SIR JOSEPH. At any rate, he could not be quite so simple. For you are a very simple soul, Sam Smith. Well, we esteem you the more for your simplicity. Friends all, I give you the toast of Sam Smith.

80

[*The toast is drunk with acclamation, and DOLPHIN, who has paid no attention to it, again hovers round with wine.*]

HOST [*rising in answer to their appeals and warming them with his Pickwickian smile*]. Ladies and gentlemen, you are very kind, and I don't pretend that it isn't pleasant to me to be praised. Tell me, have you ever wondered why I invited you here?

MISS ISIT. Because you like us, of course, you muddle-headed darling.

HOST. Was that the reason?

SIR JOSEPH. Take care, Sammy, you are not saying what you mean.

HOST. Am I not? Kindly excuse. I dare say I am as good

simple as Sir Joseph says. And yet, do you really know me? Does any person ever know another absolutely? Has not the simplest of us a secret drawer inside him with—with a lock to it?

MISS ISIT. If you have, Mr. Smith, be a dear and open it to us.

MRS. CASTRO. How delicious. He is going to tell us of his first and only love.

HOST. Ah, Mrs. Castro, I think I had one once, very nice, but I have forgotten her name. The person I 100 loved best was my brother.

PREEN. I never knew you had a brother.

HOST. I suppose none of you knew. He died two years ago.

SIR JOSEPH. Sorry, Sam Smith.

MRS. PREEN [*drawing the chocolates nearer her*]. We should like to hear about him if it isn't too sad.

HOST. Would you? He was many years my junior, and as attractive as I am commonplace. He died in a foreign land. Natural causes were certified. But there 110 were suspicious circumstances, and I went out there determined to probe the matter to the full. I did, too.

PREEN. You didn't say where the place was.

HOST. It was Monte Carlo.

[*He pauses here, as if to give time for something to happen, but nothing does happen except that MISS ISIT'S wine-glass slips from her hand to the floor.*]

Dolphin, another glass for Miss Isit.

LADY JANE. Do go on.

HOST. My inquiries were slow, but I became convinced that my brother had been poisoned.

MRS. BLAND. How dreadful. You poor man.

GOURLAY. I hope, Sam Smith, that you got on the 120
track of the criminals?

HOST. Oh yes.

[A chair creaks.]

Did you speak, Miss Isit?

MISS ISIT. Did I? I think not. What did you say about
the criminals?

HOST. Not criminals; there was only one.

PREEN. Man or woman?

HOST. We are not yet certain. What we do know is that
my brother was visited in his rooms that night by some
one who must have been the murderer. It was some 130
one who spoke English and who was certainly dressed
as a man, but it may have been a woman. There is
proof that it was some one who had been to the tables
that night. I got in touch with every 'possible', though
I had to follow some of them to distant parts.

LADY WRATHIE. It is extraordinarily interesting.

HOST. Outwardly many of them seemed to be quite
respectable people.

SIR JOSEPH. Ah, one can't go by that, Sam Smith.

HOST. I didn't. I made the most exhaustive inquiries 140
into their private lives. I did it so cunningly that not
one of them suspected why I was so anxious to make
his or her acquaintance; and then, when I was ready
for them, I invited them to my house for a week, and
they are all sitting round my table this evening.

*[As the monstrous significance of this sinks into them,
there is a hubbub at the table.]*

You wanted to know why I had asked you here, and
I am afraid that in consequence I have wandered a

little from the toast; but I thank you, Sir Joseph, I thank you all, for the too kind way in which you have drunk my health.

150

[He sits down as modestly as he had risen, but the smile has gone from his face; and the curious—which includes all the diners—may note that he is licking his lips. In the babel that again breaks forth, DOLPHIN, who has remained stationary and vacuous for the speech, goes the round of the table refilling glasses.]

PREEN [*the first to be wholly articulate*]. In the name of every one of us, Mr. Smith, I tell you that this is an outrage.

HOST. I was afraid you wouldn't like it.

SIR JOSEPH. May I ask, sir, whether all this week you have been surreptitiously ferreting into our private affairs, perhaps even rummaging our trunks?

HOST [*brightening*]. That was it. You remember how I pressed you all to show your prowess on the tennis courts and the golf links while I stayed at home? That 160 was my time for the trunks.

LADY JANE. Was there ever such a man? Did you—open our letters?

HOST. Every one of them. And there were some very queer things in them. There was one about a luncheon at the Ritz. 'You will know me,' the man wrote, 'by the gardenia I shall carry in my hand.' Perhaps I shouldn't have mentioned that. But the lady who got that letter need not be frightened. She is married, and her husband is here with her, but I won't tell you any 170 more.

MISS ISIT. I think he should be compelled to tell.

PREEN. Wrathie, there are only two ladies with their husbands.

SIR JOSEPH. Yours and mine, Preen.

LADY WRATHIE. Joseph, I don't need to tell you it wasn't your wife

MRS. PREEN. It certainly wasn't yours, Willie.

PREEN. Of that I am well assured.

SIR JOSEPH. Take care what you say, Preen. That is 180 very like a reflection on my wife.

GOURLAY. Let that pass. The other is the serious thing—so serious that it is a nightmare. Whom do you accuse of doing away with your brother, sir? Out with it.

HOST. You are not all turning against me, are you? I assure you I don't accuse any of you yet. I know that one of you did it, but I am not sure which one. I shall know soon.

VAILE. Soon? How soon?

190

HOST. Soon after the men join the ladies to-night. I ought to tell you that I am to try a little experiment to-night, something I have thought out which I have every confidence will make the guilty person fall into my hands like a ripe plum.

[He indicates rather horribly how he will squeeze it.]

LADY JANE *[hitting his hand]*. Don't do that.

SIR JOSEPH *[voicing the general unrest]*. We insist, Smith, on hearing what this experiment is to be.

HOST. That would spoil it. But I can tell you this. My speech had a little pit in it, and all the time I was 200 talking I was watching whether any of you would fall into that pit.

MRS. PREEN [*rising*]. I didn't notice any pit.

HOST. You weren't meant to, Mrs. Preen.

PREEN. May I ask, without pressing the personal note, did any one fall into your pit?

HOST. I think so.

CAPT. JENNING. Smith, we must have the name of this person.

LADY WRATHIE. Mrs. Preen has fainted.

210

[PREEN *hurries slowly to his wife's assistance, and there is some commotion.*]

MRS. PREEN. Why—what—who—I am all right now. Willie, go back to your seat. Why are you all staring at me so?

MISS ISIT. Dear Mrs. Preen, we are so glad that you are better. I wonder what upset you?

PREEN [*imprudently*]. I never knew her faint before.

MISS ISIT. I expect it was the heat.

PREEN [*nervous*]. Say it was the heat, Emily.

MRS. PREEN. No, it wasn't the heat, Miss Isit. It was Mr. Smith's talk of a pit.

220

PREEN. My dear.

MRS. PREEN. I suddenly remembered how, as soon as that man mentioned that the place of the crime was Monte Carlo, some lady had let her wine-glass fall. That was why I fainted. I can't remember who she was.

LADY WRATHIE. It was Miss Isit.

MRS. PREEN. Really?

MISS ISIT. There is a thing called the law of libel. If Lady Wrathie and Mrs. Preen will kindly formulate their charges——

230

GOURLAY. Oh, come, let us keep our heads.

HOST. That's what I say.

GOURLAY. What about a motive? Scotland Yard always seeks for that first.

HOST. I see two possible motives. If a woman did it—well, they tended to run after my brother, and you all know of what a woman scorned is capable.

PREEN [*reminiscent*]. Rather.

HOST. Then, again, my brother had a large sum of money with him, which disappeared. 240

SIR JOSEPH. If you could trace that money it might be a help.

HOST. All sorts of things are a help. The way you are all pretending to know nothing about the matter is a help. It might be a help if I could find out which of you has a clammy hand that at this moment wants to creep beneath the table. [*Not a hand creeps.*]

I'll tell you something more. Murderers' hearts beat differently from other hearts. [*He raises his finger.*]
Listen. [*They listen.* 250]

Whose was it?

[*A cry from MISS VAILE brings her into undesired prominence.*]

MISS VAILE [*explaining*]. I thought I heard it. It seemed to come from across the table.

[*This does not give universal satisfaction.*]

Please don't think because this man made me scream that I did it. I never was on a yacht in my life, at Monte Carlo or anywhere else.

[*Nor does even this have the desired effect.*]

VAILE [*sharply*]. Bella!

MISS VAILE. Have I said—anything odd?

GOURLAY. A yacht? There has been no talk about a yacht.

260

MISS VAILE [*shrinking*]. Hasn't there?

HOST. Perhaps there should have been. It was on his yacht that my brother died.

MRS. CASTRO. You said in his rooms.

HOST. Yes, that is what I said. I wanted to find out which of you knew better.

LADY JANE. And Miss Vaile—

MISS VAILE. I can explain it all if—if—

MISS ISIT. Yes, give her a little time.

HOST. Perhaps you would all like to take a few minutes. 270

MISS VAILE. I admit that I was at Monte Carlo—with my brother—when an Englishman died there rather mysteriously on a yacht. When Mr. Smith told us of his brother's death, I concluded that it was probably the same person.

VAILE. I presume that you accept my sister's statement?

MISS ISIT. Ab-sol-ute-ly.

HOST. She is not the only one of you who knew that yacht. You all admit having been at Monte Carlo two years ago, I suppose?

280

CAPT. JENNINGS. One of us wasn't. Lady Jane was never there.

HOST [*with beady eyes*]. What do you say to that, Lady Jane?

[LADY JANE *falters*.

CAPT. JENNINGS. Tell him, Jane.

HOST. Yes, tell me.

CAPT. JENNINGS. You never were there; say so.

LADY JANE. Why shouldn't I have been there?

CAPT. JENNINGS. No reason. But when I happened to mention Monte Carlo to you the other day I certainly 290 understood—— Jane, I never forget a word you say, and you did say you had never been there.

LADY JANE. So you—you, Jack—you accuse me—you—me——

CAPT. JENNINGS. I haven't, I haven't.

LADY JANE. You have all heard that Captain Jennings and I are engaged. I want you to understand that we are so no longer.

CAPT. JENNINGS. Jane!

[She removes the engagement ring from her finger and hesitates how to transfer it to the donor, who is many seats apart from her. The ever-resourceful DOLPHIN goes to her with a tray on which she deposits the ring, and it is thus conveyed to the unhappy JENNINGS. Next moment DOLPHIN has to attend to the maid, who makes an audible gurgle of sympathy with love, which is a breach of etiquette. He opens the door for her, and she makes a shameful exit. He then fills the Captain's glass.]

HOST *[in one of his nicer moods]*. Take comfort, Captain. 300 If Lady Jane should prove to be the person wanted—mind you, perhaps she isn't—why, then the ring is a matter of small importance, because you would be parted in any case. I mean by the handcuffs. I forgot to say that I have them here. *[He gropes at his feet, where other people merely have a table-napkin.]* Pass them round, Dolphin. Perhaps some of you have never seen them before.

PREEN. A pocket edition of Pickwick we called him; he is more like a pocket edition of the devil. 310

HOST. Please, a little courtesy. After all, I am your host.

[DOLPHIN goes the round of the table with the hand-cuffs on the tray that a moment ago contained a lover's ring. They meet with no success.]

Do take a look at them, Mrs. Castro; they are an adjustable pair in case they should be needed for small wrists. Would you like to try them on, Sir Joseph? They close with a click—a click.

SIR JOSEPH [*pettishly*]. We quite understand.

[MRS. BLAND rises.]

MRS. BLAND. How stupid of us. We have all forgotten that he said the murderer may have been a woman in man's clothes, and I have just remembered that when 320 we played the charade on Wednesday he wanted the ladies to dress up as men. Was it to see whether one of us looked as if she could have passed for a man that night at Monte Carlo?

HOST. You've got it, Mrs. Bland.

SIR JOSEPH. Well, none of you did dress up, at any rate.

MRS. BLAND [*distressed*]. Oh, Sir Joseph. Some of us did dress up, in private, and we all agreed that—of course there's nothing in it, but we all agreed that the only figure which might have deceived a careless eye was Lady Wrathie's. 330

PREEN. I say!

LADY WRATHIE. Joseph, do you sit there and permit this?

HOST. Now, now, there is nothing to be touchy about.
Have I not been considerate?

SIR JOSEPH. Smith, I hold you to be an impudent
scoundrel.

HOST. May not I, who lost a brother in circumstances
so painful, appeal for a little kindly consideration from 340
those of you who are innocent—shady characters
though you be?

PREEN. I must say that rather touches me. Some of us
might have reasons for being reluctant to have our
past at Monte inquired into without being the person
you are asking for.

HOST. Precisely. I am presuming that to be the posi-
tion of eleven of you.

LADY WRATHIE. Joseph, I must ask you to come up-
stairs with me to pack our things. 350

MISS ISIT. For my part, after poor Mr. Smith's appeal I
think it would be rather heartless not to stay and see
the thing out. Especially, Mr. Smith, if you would
give us just an inkling of what your—little experiment
—in the drawing-room—is to be.

HOST. I can't say anything about it except that it isn't
to take place in the drawing-room. You ladies are to
go this evening to Dolphin's room, where we shall join
you presently. [*Even DOLPHIN is taken aback.*]

MRS. PREEN. Why should we go there? 360

HOST. Because I tell you to, Mrs. Preen.

LADY WRATHIE. I go to no such room. I leave this
house at once.

MRS. PREEN. I also.

LADY JANE. All of us. I want to go home.

LADY WRATHIE. Joseph, come.

MRS. PREEN. Willie, I am ready. I wish you a long good-bye, Mr. Smith.

[Their dignified advance upon the door is spoilt on opening it by their finding a policeman standing there. They glare at MR. SMITH.]

HOST. The ladies will now adjourn to Dolphin's room.

LADY WRATHIE. I say no.

370

MRS. CASTRO. Let us. Why shouldn't the innocent ones help him?

[She gives SMITH her hand with a disarming smile.]

HOST. I knew you would be on my side, Mrs. Castro. Cold hand—warm heart. That is the saying, isn't it?

[She shrinks.]

LADY WRATHIE. Those who wish to leave this man's house, follow me.

HOST *[for her special benefit]*. My brother's cigarette case was of faded green leather, and a hole had been burned in the back of it.

[For some reason this takes the fight out of her, and she departs for DOLPHIN'S room, tossing her head, and followed by the other ladies.]

VAILE *[seeing SMITH drop a word to MISS VAILE as she goes]*.

What did you say to my sister?

380

HOST. I only said to her that she isn't your sister. *[The last lady to go is MISS ISIT.]* So you never met my brother, Miss Isit?

MISS ISIT. Not that I know of, Mr. Smith.

HOST. I have a photograph of him that I should like to show you.

MISS ISIT. I don't care to see it.

HOST. You are going to see it.

[It is in his pocket, and he suddenly puts it before her eyes.]

MISS ISIT *[surprised]*. That is not—— *[She checks herself.]*

HOST. No, that is not my brother. That is some one you 390
have never seen. But how did you know it wasn't my
brother? *[She makes no answer.]*

I rather think you knew Dick, Miss Isit.

MISS ISIT *[dropping him a curtsey]*. I rather think I did,
Mr. Sam. What then?

[She goes impudently. Now that the ladies have left the room, the men don't quite know what to do except stare at their little host. Decanter in one hand and a box of cigarettes in the other, he toddles down to what would have been the hostess's chair had there been a hostess.]

HOST. Draw up closer, won't you?

[They don't want to, but they do, with the exception of VAILE, who is studying a picture very near the door.]

You are not leaving us, Vaile?

VAILE. I thought——

HOST *[sharply]*. Sit down.

VAILE. Oh, quite.

400

HOST. You are not drinking anything, Gourlay. Captain, the port is with you.

[The wine revolves, but no one partakes.]

PREEN *[heavily]*. Smith, there are a few words that I think it my duty to say. This is a very unusual situation.

HOST. Yes. You'll have a cigarette, Preen?

[The cigarettes are passed round and share the fate of the wine.]

GOURLAY. I wonder why Mrs. Bland—she is the only one of them that there seems to be nothing against.

VAILE. A bit fishy, that.

PREEN [*murmuring*]. It was rather odd my wife fainting.

CAPT. JENNINGS [*who has been a drooping figure since a recent incident*]. I dare say the ladies are saying the same sort 410 of thing about us.

[*He lights a cigarette—one of his own. DOLPHIN is offering them liqueurs.*

PREEN [*sulkily*]. No, thanks. [*But he takes one.*] Smith, I am sure I speak for all of us when I say we would esteem it a favour if you ask Dolphin to withdraw.

HOST. He has his duties.

GOURLAY [*pettishly, to DOLPHIN*]. No, thanks. He gets on my nerves. Can nothing disturb this man?

CAPT. JENNINGS [*also refusing*]. No, thanks. Evidently nothing.

SIR JOSEPH [*reverting to a more hopeful subject*]. Everything 420 seems to point to its being a woman—wouldn't you say, Smith?

HOST. I wouldn't say everything, Sir Joseph. Dolphin thinks it was a man.

SIR JOSEPH. One of us here?

[*SMITH nods, and they survey their friend DOLPHIN with renewed distaste.*

GOURLAY. Did he know your brother?

HOST. He was my brother's servant out there.

VAILE [*rising*]. What? He wasn't the fellow who——?

HOST. Who what, Vaile?

PREEN. I say!

430

VAILE [*hotly*]. What do you say?

PREEN. Nothing [*doggedly*]. But I say!

[*Though DOLPHIN is now a centre of interest, no one seems able to address him personally.*]

GOURLAY. Are we to understand that you have had Dolphin spying on us here?

HOST. That was the idea. And he helped me by taking your finger-prints.

VAILE. How can that help?

HOST. He sent them to Scotland Yard.

SIR JOSEPH [*vindictively*]. Oh, he did, did he?

PREEN. What shows finger-marks best?

440

HOST. Glass, I believe.

PREEN [*putting down his glass*]. Now I see why the Americans went dry.

SIR JOSEPH. Smith, how can you be sure that Dolphin wasn't the man himself?

[*MR. SMITH makes no answer. DOLPHIN picks up SIR JOSEPH's napkin and returns it to him.*]

PREEN. Somehow I still cling to the hope that it was a woman.

VAILE. If it is a woman, Smith, what will you do?

HOST. She shall hang by the neck until she is dead. You won't try the benedictine, Vaile?

450

VAILE. No, thanks.

[*The maid returns with coffee, which she presents under DOLPHIN's superintendence. Most of them accept. The cups are already full.*]

SIR JOSEPH [*in his lighter manner*]. Did you notice what the ladies are doing in Dolphin's room, Lucy?

MAID [*in a tremble, and wishing she could fly from this house*].

Yes, Sir Joseph, they are wondering, Sir Joseph, which of you it was that did it.

PREEN. How like women!

GOURLAY. By the way, Smith, do you know how the poison was administered?

HOST. Yes, in coffee. [*He is about to help himself.*]

MAID. You are to take the yellow cup, sir.

46c

HOST. Who said so?

MAID. The lady who poured out this evening, sir.

PREEN. Aha, who was she?

MAID. Lady Jane Wraye, sir.

PREEN. I don't like it.

GOURLAY. Smith, don't drink that coffee.

CAPT. JENNINGS [*in wrath*]. Why shouldn't he drink it?

GOURLAY. Well, if it was she—a desperate woman—it was given in coffee the other time, remember. But stop, she wouldn't be likely to do it in the same way a second time.

VAILE. I'm not so sure. Perhaps she doesn't suspect that Smith knows how it was given the first time. We didn't know till the ladies had left the room.

PREEN [*admiring him at last*]. I say, Vaile, that's good.

CAPT. JENNINGS. I have no doubt she merely meant that she had sugared it to his taste.

VAILE [*smiling*]. Sugar!

GOURLAY. Couldn't we analyse it?

CAPT. JENNINGS [*the one who is at present looking most like a murderer*]. Smith, I insist on your drinking that coffee. 480

VAILE. Lady Jane! Who would have thought it!

PREEN [*become a mere echo of VAILE*]. Lady Jane! Who would have thought it!

CAPT. JENNINGS. Give me the yellow cup.

[*He drains it to the dregs.*]

SIR JOSEPH. Nobly done, in any case. Look here, Jennings—you are among friends—it hadn't an odd taste, had it?

CAPT. JENNINGS. Not a bit.

VAILE. He wouldn't feel the effects yet.

PREEN. He wouldn't feel them yet. 490

HOST. Vaile ought to know.

PREEN. Vaile knows.

SIR JOSEPH. Why ought Vaile to know, Smith?

HOST. He used to practise as a doctor.

SIR JOSEPH. You never mentioned that to me, Vaile.

VAILE. Why should I?

HOST. Why should he? He is not allowed to practise now. [*We now see that VAILE has unpleasant teeth.*]

PREEN. A doctor—poison—ease of access.

[*His passion for VAILE is shattered. He gives him back the ring, as CAPT. JENNINGS might say, and wanders the room despondently.*]

SIR JOSEPH. We are where we were again. 500

[*DOLPHIN escorts out the maid, who is not in a condition to go alone.*]

CAPT. JENNINGS. At any rate that fellow has gone.

GOURLAY [*the first to laugh for some time*]. Excuse me. I suddenly remembered that Wrathie had called this the end of a perfect day.

HOST. It isn't ended yet.

[MR. PREEN *in his wanderings toward the sideboard encounters a very large glass and a small bottle of brandy. He introduces them to each other. He swirls the contents in the glass as if hopeful that it may climb the rim and so escape without his having to drink it. This is a trick which has become so common with him that when lost in thought he sometimes goes through the motion though there is no glass in his hand.*

PREEN [*communing with himself*]. I feel I am not my old bright self. [*Sips.*] I can't believe for a moment that it was my wife. [*Sips.*] And yet—[*sips*—that fainting, you know. [*Sips.*] I should go away for a bit until it blew over. [*Sips.*] I don't think I should ever marry ⁵¹⁰ again.

[*Sips and sips, and becomes perhaps a little more like his old bright self.*

GOURLAY. There is something shocking about sitting here, suspecting each other in this way. Let us go to that room and have it out.

HOST. I am quite ready. Nothing more to drink, anyone? Bring your cigarette, Captain.

SIR JOSEPH [*hoarsely*]. Smith—Sam—before we go, can I have a word with you alone?

HOST. Sorry, Joseph. And now, shall we join the ladies? [*As they rise, a dreadful scream is heard from the direction of DOLPHIN's room—a woman's scream. Next moment DOLPHIN reappears in the doorway. He is no*

longer the imperturbable butler. He is livid. He tries to speak, but no words will come out of his mouth. CAPT. JENNINGS dashes past him, and the others follow. DOLPHIN looks at his master with mingled horror and appeal, and then goes. SMITH sits down again to take one glass of brandy. Where he sits we cannot see his face, but his rigid little back is merciless. As he rises to follow the others the curtain falls on Act One.

CLIFFORD BAX

Silly Willy

A Marionette Play

1917

CLIFFORD BAX, F.R.S.L., born in 1886. Educated privately. Studied art at the Slade School and elsewhere, but abandoned painting for literary and dramatic work in prose and verse. Chairman of the Incorporated Stage Society, 1929. The pictorial quality of much of his dramatic work reveals the painter unextinguished in him, and is very evident in this agreeable marionette play.

The puppet-show is a dramatic form that goes back to classical antiquity, and though Punch and Judy are vanishing from our streets there are still some few *fantoccini* to act the plays of the modern dramatists who are good enough to write for them.

CHARACTERS

SILLY WILLY, *an old soldier with a wooden leg.*

MARY ANN, *her maid.*

LADY SILVERLOCKS.

DR. BEDSYDE MANNERS.

WAGGLY, *a dog.*

NOTE.—The front scenes are played before a drop-curtain, which represents the façade of a Georgian house.

When the drop-curtain rises, it shows a drawing-room.

SCENE I (*Front*)

Enter SILLY WILLY carrying a basket of laundry. He wears a tattered Eighteenth-century uniform and a patch over one eye.

SILLY WILLY [*singing to the tune of 'The Beggar'*]. To think an old soldier should come down to this—

To carrying the laundry for master and miss:

Or, if you'll excuse me the manner of speech,
To carrying the breeches instead of the breach.

I'm bald as an egg;

I've lost my left leg;

And though I'm here working, I'd much rather beg.

[He knocks at the front door.]

Yes, I'm an old soldier. Fought for King George the Third, God bless him! *[Salutes.]* Yes, I was present at the famous Battle of Hastings.

[The door opens, revealing MARY ANN, with a pail and a mop.]

MARY ANN. Morning, Silly Willy. So you've brought back the laundry. I hope everything hasn't shrunk, as usual?

SILLY WILLY. Water will shrink anything. I never did like water.

MARY ANN. Put down the basket, and don't make a noise. Lady Silverlocks is that bad.

SILLY WILLY. Oh? . . . Is it mumps or measles?

MARY ANN. Yesterday was her birthday, and she ate too many chocolates.

[She takes the laundry out of the basket and pushes it behind the door.]

SILLY WILLY. Were they creams or plain? I love creams.

MARY ANN. As though a lady of title would eat plain chocolates! Get along with you.

SILLY WILLY *[taking up the basket].* 'I'm bald as an egg;

I've lost my left leg;

And though I'm here working, I'd much rather beg.

[MARY ANN closes the door. SILLY WILLY goes out.]

SCENE II (*Back*)

LADY SILVERLOCKS *in a big chair, her feet in a tub. WAGGLY asleep.*

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Mary Ann! Mary Ann! Drat the girl! Why don't she come? Mary Ann!

Enter MARY ANN.

MARY ANN. Did you call, m'm? 30

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Idiot! You don't suppose Waggly called you?

MARY ANN. No, m'm. He's asleep.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Yes! You two, you're always asleep. . . . I only get ill when I want to enjoy myself, and this time I'm not enjoying my bad health at all. I'm worse than I meant to be.

MARY ANN. Oh deary me! You can't be going to Heaven?

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Fiddlesticks! Fetch the doctor,— 40
Dr. Bedsyde Manners. [*MARY ANN starts to go.*] And where are you going now, pray? Stop here and turn my pillows.

MARY ANN. How can I do that and also go for the doctor?

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Don't answer back. If I say you you can, you can. Fetch more pillows.

[MARY ANN goes out.]

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Waggly! [*WAGGLY lifts an ear.*]
Waggly,—my own precious! [*WAGGLY trots up to her.*]
You know the tall red house with the green lamp-post 50
in front of it? That's where Dr. Bedsyde Manners

lives. Run and fetch him at once. You understand, precious? [WAGGLY *nods*.] Off you go, then! Wait! Here's a chocolate. Beg for it. Good dog!

[WAGGLY *goes out*.]

SCENE III (*Front*)

Enter WAGGLY. *He looks round. Scratches an ear. Enter* DR. BEDSYDE MANNERS, *with a bottle of medicine.*

DR. MANNERS. Really, really, this is the most marvellous medicine in the world. It is not often that people get a medicine like this. [WAGGLY *trots up to him and pulls at his long green coat*.] Well, my little man, what is it? Oh no, you can't have any of my medicine. It would make you dance on your hind legs for an hour without 60 stopping. . . . Eh? You want me to go in here? Lady Silverlocks not well? [WAGGLY *nods*. DR. MANNERS *knocks at the door*.] Run along home now—run along!

[WAGGLY *goes off*. MARY ANN *opens the door*.]

MARY ANN. Oh, Dr. Manners! You're just in time to save her ladyship from going to Heaven. Come in, come in!

SCENE IV (*Back*)

The drop-curtain having risen, DR. MANNERS walks into the room.

DR. MANNERS. Well? And how are we?

LADY SILVERLOCKS. I'm ill—very, very very very ill.

DR. MANNERS. Ah. . . . Let me feel your pulse.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. One moment! That wretched girl 70 always leaves crumbs in my chair, and they *are* so uncomfortable. . . . There. Now you can feel our pulse.

DR. MANNERS. It is bad, bad. You must have been eating too many chocolates.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Only seventeen.

DR. MANNERS. But seventeen big ones are equal to thirty-four little ones. Lady Silverlocks, you are suffering from chocolate-pulse.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Am I very bad?

DR. MANNERS. Very very very very bad. I am not sure so that I can cure you.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Nonsense! If I say you can, you can.

DR. MANNERS. If I do, what will you give me?

LADY SILVERLOCKS. The rest of the chocolates.

DR. MANNERS. Oh no. You have eaten all the top layer, and they always put the dull ones underneath. . . . I tell you what! I will cure you if you will give me your little dog.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Waggly? Certainly not! 90

DR. MANNERS. Very well then. Go to Heaven!

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Stop! I *will* give you Waggly.

DR. MANNERS. Promise? You can't take him back afterwards, you know.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Just make me well, that's all.

DR. MANNERS. With pleasure. You shall drink some of my famous medicine.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. But is it nasty?

DR. MANNERS. Nasty! Why, it's simply delicious,—like cream and strawberry jam spread on toffee. 100

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Quick, quick!

DR. MANNERS. Just one mouthful, and it will make you dance like mad. You won't be able to stop for the next half-hour. . . . Now! Open,—open widely! There!

[He pours some medicine into her mouth. She jumps up and skips round and round.]

DR. MANNERS. What did I tell you? Splendid, splendid!
[She dances more and more madly.]

And in case you are ever ill again, I will leave the bottle here. And now,—where is Waggly?

LADY SILVERLOCKS *[dancing]*. Waggly! Waggly! *[Enter WAGGLY.]* I can't stop. Go along with the doctor. 110

DR. MANNERS *[to WAGGLY]*. Come along, come along!

[DR. MANNERS and WAGGLY go out. Enter MARY ANN.]

MARY ANN. My! Good gracious me! Whatever's the matter?

LADY SILVERLOCKS. The medicine,—it's marvellous. But I'm getting tired. Stop me, Mary Ann, stop me!

MARY ANN. I can't, I can't!

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Rubbish! If I say you can, you can.
[MARY ANN at last succeeds. LADY SILVERLOCKS falls exhausted into her chair.]

MARY ANN. Lor, m'm,—it is a medicine and no mistake.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. I'm well. Fetch me some dinner,—and a bone for Waggly. , 120

MARY ANN. You gave Waggly to the doctor, m'm.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Only if he made me well. So listen! I am going to pretend to be worse than I was. I shall cough and sneeze so terribly that Dr. Manners will

have to admit that the bargain is off. Run and find him!

[MARY ANN goes out. LADY SILVERLOCKS makes herself a picture of misery.]

SCENE V (*Front*)

Enter SILLY WILLY.

SILLY WILLY. No! I won't carry laundry another minute. All I want is sixpence a day: and there's plenty of ways of getting sixpence. . . . Ah, here comes old Dr. Manners. And a nice little dog with him too! 130

Enter DR. MANNERS. *He stops, whistles, and goes on.*

SILLY WILLY. You'll pardon me, sir, if I ask a question. No offence.

DR. MANNERS. The time? The time? Half-past four.

SILLY WILLY. But I don't want to know the time. I want to know whether you've sixpence to spare for an old soldier.

DR. MANNERS. I never give to beggars.

SILLY WILLY. I'm not a beggar. I'm an earnest enquirer. I want to know if you have a threepenny bit for an old soldier. 140

DR. MANNERS. No! And I'm in a hurry.

[*He goes out, right, as WAGGLY enters left. SILLY WILLY looks cautiously after the DOCTOR, then turns to WAGGLY and holds out the laundry-basket.*]

SILLY WILLY. Now then, my beauty! In you jump! Hoopla!

[WAGGLY jumps into the basket. *Enter* MARY ANN.]

MARY ANN. Oh Silly Willy,—have you seen Dr. Bedsyde Manners? The missus is took that bad again.

SILLY WILLY. Hi! Dr. Manners! Hi! . . . But seeing as how there's going to be more trouble in this street, I'm off.
[*He goes out as DR. MANNERS returns.*]

DR. MANNERS. My dear Mary Ann! Whatever's the matter now? 150

MARY ANN. Oh sir,—her ladyship's took that bad again, and she says you must give back Waggly, because you haven't made her well.

DR. MANNERS. Never! And I never heard such nonsense. . . . But where is he? Waggly! Waggly!

MARY ANN. Oh Doctor,—you don't mean as you've been and gone and lost him?
[*They stand, back to back, whistling.*]

DR. MANNERS. I was busy inventing a new medicine, and it's my belief that Waggly ran home again when I wasn't looking. Mary Ann, open that door at once! 160

SCENE VI (*Back*)

LADY SILVERLOCKS *is coughing and sneezing. The medicine bottle is beside her.*

LADY SILVERLOCKS. So there you are! Look at me! I'm worse than ever. You must give back Waggly.

DR. MANNERS. Don't be absurd. You are hiding him.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. But he followed you out of the house.

DR. MANNERS. And you called him back.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. I never!

DR. MANNERS. You did. You're a cheat.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. I'm not.

DR. MANNERS. And I don't believe you are ill at all. 170
You can't be, after drinking my lovely medicine.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Of course I'm ill. If I say I am, I
am. Give me my Waggly!

DR. MANNERS. Shan't.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. You must.

DR. MANNERS. Shan't, shan't, shan't!

LADY SILVERLOCKS. There's no such word.

DR. MANNERS. There is.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. There isn't. I tell you, I *must* have
Waggly. 180

DR. MANNERS. So must I. You're perfectly ridiculous.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. If you won't give him up, I'll throw
this medicine bottle at your head.

DR. MANNERS. If you won't keep your promise, I'll tear
off your wig.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. I think you're simply disgusting.

DR. MANNERS. I'm not.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. You are.

DR. MANNERS. You're a mean horrid, unfair, hateful old
woman, so there! 190

LADY SILVERLOCKS. I'm not.

DR. MANNERS. I tell you, you are.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. If I say I'm not, I'm not.

DR. MANNERS. Give me Waggly!

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Give him to me! [*A knock on the door.*] Go and see who it is.

[*DR. MANNERS goes to the door, back.*]

DR. MANNERS. It's that wooden-legged soldier.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. What does *he* want?

DR. MANNERS. Says he has a little dog for sale. Five shillings.

200

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Buy it then, and give me my Waggly.

DR. MANNERS. Buy it yourself. . . . Come in, my good man.

Enter SILLY WILLY, with WAGGLY in the basket.

SILLY WILLY. Lovely little dog, mam. Bred him myself. Had him these twenty years. Many's the time he saved my life, out in Botany Bay. And all for five shillings, tail and all.

DR. MANNERS. Let her ladyship see him.

SILLY WILLY. Anything to oblige.

210

[*He opens the basket. WAGGLY jumps out and runs bewildered between the DOCTOR and LADY SILVERLOCKS.*]

LADY SILVERLOCKS. My Waggly!

DR. MANNERS. He's mine, I tell you.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. If you say another word, I'll have a fainting-fit.

DR. MANNERS. Come along, Waggly!

LADY SILVERLOCKS. Waggly will stay with me.

DR. MANNERS. Don't be absurd.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. I warned you. . . . I'm fainting!
Oh, oh, oh! [She swoons.]

DR. MANNERS. Now's my chance! 220

SILLY WILLY. No, sir! Not while the British Army has
a leg to stand on.

DR. MANNERS. But it's my dog.

SILLY WILLY. And she says it's hers. You can't both
have it.

DR. MANNERS. Of course not.

SILLY WILLY. Yes, you can, though.

DR. MANNERS. Both?

SILLY WILLY. Yes, sir. Suppose you marry the lady?

LADY SILVERLOCKS [recovering] What? What? 230

SILLY WILLY. What do you say?

LADY SILVERLOCKS. *It's much the best thing to do.*

DR. MANNERS. He is wagging his tail! . . . I agree.

[DR. MANNERS and LADY SILVERLOCKS embrace.]

SILLY WILLY. I propose the health of the bride and
bridegroom.

LADY SILVERLOCKS. There's nothing to drink it in.

DR. MANNERS. Nothing? There's my medicine! Ladies
first!

[LADY SILVERLOCKS drinks from the bottle. She begins at once to caper about wildly. DR. MANNERS, hardly able to wait for his turn, takes a long pull and also begins to dance.]

As SILLY WILLY applies his lips to the bottle, they dance off the stage. SILLY WILLY now prances round as joyously as his wooden leg permits.

Enter MARY ANN.

MARY ANN. My gracious!

SILLY WILLY [*pointing to the bottle*]. Try it, try it! 240

[MARY ANN goes to the bottle and spills some of the liquid.]

MARY ANN. Oh, lor!

SILLY WILLY [*still dancing*]. Never mind that. Drink the rest! [*She does so. They caper off the stage.*]

[WAGGLY sees the spilt medicine, laps it up and, getting on to his hind legs, brings down the curtain, as he dances a pas seul.]

NAOMI MITCHISON

Nix-nought-nothing

NAOMI MARGARET MITCHISON: born in 1897. Daughter of John Scott Haldane, C.H., F.R.S., and therefore member of a Scottish family distinguished in science, politics, and philosophy. Educated at the Dragon School, Oxford, and as an Oxford Home-Student. Her scholarly novels of ancient Greece at once made their mark, although she has also devoted much energy to modern politics and political philosophy. How little such activities have weighed down her lighter fancies is clear from *Nix-Nought-Nothing*.

CHARACTERS

THE KING.

THE QUEEN.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING.

THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

THE HEAD COOK.

THE WIZARD.

MARY.

THE FOREIGN PRINCESS.

SCENE I. *A Desert.*

This play is all meant to be done before a plain black curtain, which can be divided in the middle, and it will be as well if there are no properties on the stage during the first scene. The place is a desert, a long way off. In the left corner there is a bearded WIZARD, standing quite still with his right arm stretched out, and a great, shining ring on his middle finger. He should wear long robes of black and olive green, and a black magic cap, embroidered with the symbols of his curious profession.

THE WIZARD. I am a wizard, and I know
The way men come, the way they go,
All to-morrow and yesterday
And the things that happen far away.

That which I want, the same I get.

And here comes one who is fish for my net.

[Now there comes in, R., a very weary and lost-looking KING, with a traveller's cloak over rich robes, and a crown on his head, because he is the sort of KING who prefers to be recognized. He looks round him.]

THE KING. I am the King of Strand-on-the Green,
The finest kingdom that ever was seen,
But woe's my heart for my kingdom!

And my dear queen who is waiting there 10
Has the bluest eyes and the softest hair,
And the reddest of lips that ever were,
And oh, I wish I could see her!

Much I've travelled and far I've been,
All the sights of the world I've seen,
But nought so fair as my bonny queen
And my own kingdom of Strand-on-the-Green,
Oh how many years till I find it!

[The WIZARD appears to the KING.]

WIZARD. Wandering king who has wandered far 20
Into the land where dragons are,
Over the seas with purple foam,
I can bring you back to your home:
Where hedges blossom and thrushes sing
But all men mourn for a long-lost king,
Yet none so sad as a weeping queen
In your far kingdom of Strand-on-the-Green.

KING. Oh my queen and my kingdom fair!
How can you hope to bring me there?
What is your thought and what your art,
How can you see where I hide my heart? 30

WIZARD. I am a Wizard of high renown [*He bows low.*
—The magic cap to the royal crown—
Straight in an eye-blink home you shall be,
And Nix-nought-nothing is all my fee!

KING. You shall have rubies, pearls and gold,
As much as your full-spread cloak will hold!

WIZARD. What would I do with your pearls and all,
I who have fairy gems at call?
Promise me this for an easy task:
Nix-nought-nothing is all I ask.

KING. Why, I have sworn! Now quick to the deed!
I will follow if you but lead,
Take me there where I long to be,
And Nix-nought-nothing your price shall be!
[*The WIZARD moves suddenly and lays his hands from behind over the KING's eyes. And while he is speaking, the KING sways and staggers as though buffeted by a tremendous wind.*

WIZARD. High-over-low, low-over-high,
I call, I call
All
The winds in the sky!
Low-over-high, high-over-low,
I call, I call
All
The streams that flow!
Green of the land and blue of the sea,
And Nix-nought-nothing my price shall be!
[*He takes his hand away and steps backwards and out through the curtain. The KING stares all about him more and more amazedly.*

KING. Oh look, oh see!

Oh tell me, where can I be?

Is this my river, my green rushes growing?

How soft the wind is blowing!

Are these my farmsteads, my young fields of corn,

My land where I was born?

Oh my dun cows, lifting your sweet-breathed heads! 60

Oh my lost lily beds!

Is that my city where I held such state?

Is this my palace gate?

[Now comes in from the R. the QUEEN, crowned and robed, with attendants. Among them the COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF in the fullest possible uniform, and the HEAD COOK, with a large crown embroidered on his ample apron and magnificent cap. Beside the QUEEN is her son, a tall lad, dressed as a PRINCE in a bright-coloured tunic with a jewelled belt, short breeches and stockings, a sword at his side and a small gold circlet on his head. The QUEEN and KING recognize one another.]

QUEEN. My King!

KING. My Queen—my darling at long last!

[They embrace.]

QUEEN. Oh, the ill years are past!

[The COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF rushes forward on the KING'S R., and kisses his hand enthusiastically.]

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. My royal master, welcome home again!

I have such feats to tell!—such heaps of slain——

[The HEAD COOK now bursts forward in the same way to the KING'S L.]

COOK. My royal Lord! My King! Oh splendid sight! 70
Oh what a dinner you shall have to-night!

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Bright shines our valiant name
on Glory's scroll!

COOK. Pork pies and peacocks! Oxen roasted whole!

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Heroic hearts 'fore whom our
foeman quakes!

COOK. Tremendous jellies and portentous cakes!

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Our gallant armies! All the
world has heard——

COOK. Mountains of cheese, and lakes of shining curd!

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. See, see, the royal guards ad-
vance in line!

COOK. Great massy sturgeons, lobsters boiled in wine!

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Victories!

COOK. Turbot!

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Sieges!

COOK. Oysters' hearts! 80

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Attacks!

COOK. Plum puddings!

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Swords!

COOK. Delicious tarts!

KING [*with his hands over his ears*]. My loyal subjects, how
I thrill to hear

Your words contending for each eager ear!

But stay a moment!—oh my queen, my dear——?

[*He looks towards the Boy.*

[*The QUEEN half turns to bring her son forward by
the hand, face to face with his father.*

QUEEN. Yes, yes, it is true!

This is your boy,
Our son, half me and half you,
Born the year that you left me,
Born for my only joy
When your sad going bereft me
Of all that I held so dear.

90

But I knew you would come again,
You would stand beside me here,
And at once I would quite forget
The years of sorrow and pain:
They have dried away like the dew!
But the boy is nameless yet,
For I left his naming to you.

KING. My son! Your eyes are as bright
As pools where the sun has shone
In the sweet morning air . . .

100

PRINCE [*coming forward*]. And yet not nameless quite,
For a love-name at least I bear,
A token that you were gone
But would come, would come in the end!
Now you and I are one:
Father, I am your son,
I am Nix-nought-nothing!

[But as they take each other by the hand, the curtain at the back parts quietly, and all at once the WIZARD is standing beside them.]

WIZARD. I have brought you home and I claim my fee:
Nix-nought-nothing was the price to be!

110

KING [*holding out his hands in horror and prayer*]. My son!

WIZARD. I come for the boy without a name,
Nix-nought-nothing is all I claim!

QUEEN [*despairing too*]. My son!

WIZARD. This is the day they longed to see:

And Nix-nought-nothing must come with me!

[*He lays his hand on the PRINCE's shoulder, and the curtain falls.*]

SCENE II. *Outside the Wizard's House.*

One would like, of course, to have a black carved house with small windows, and the sudden bulge and overhang of a twisted staircase; one would like stiff borders of queer plants, dull green with white and purple faces. But if, as they should, the audience have read plenty of fairy tales, all this will be in their minds, and they will not need it on the stage. There is a heavy bench, carved and draped, and, sitting on it, the WIZARD's daughter MARY, dressed in the traditional skirt and kirtle of dull blue, embroidered with silver, and her fair hair snooded with blue. She wears a long necklace and thick bracelets of gold and pearls, and sits with her hands clasped wearily in her lap.

MARY. No one can hear me:
The white owl only,
The forest haunter,
Is not less lonely:
No one comes near me.

120

There is no song here
But this poor Mary's:
My father's garden
Is full of fairies;
They stay so long here
On wet leaves swinging,
And do not fear me,

But will not answer:
No one can hear me—
Oh, hush, my singing!

130

[*Now the WIZARD comes in, L., with NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING following him. The PRINCE stays at one side, looking about him in fear and interest, and the WIZARD goes over to his daughter.*

WIZARD. Oh daughter Mary
I bring a stranger
To do my bidding;
And you be wary,
And watch for danger:

Nor seek to aid him
With voice or finger,
When he asks counsel
For aught I bade him:
Nor stoop to linger

140

About his doings,
Nor yet be sorry,
Nor call him friend
When Nix-nought-nothing
With sighs and rueings,
My anger's quarry,
His life shall end! [*She bows her head in assent.*

MARY. My heart is lead:
I hear, obeying;
I draw chill breath.
Your doom is weighing
Above his head.
So many princes
Have met their death

150

When you ensnare them.
But oh my father,
My heart that winces!—
Will you not spare them?

WIZARD. My foolish daughter! 160
If you but knew
Of the secret maze,
The blood that's needful
For the magic brew!
But you be heedful
And go your ways.

*[He turns away from her, and towards NIX-NOUGHT-
NOTHING, who comes forward.]*

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. I am here, Wizard, to do your
bidding. But who is she?

WIZARD. That is my daughter Mary . . . who has no
power. I have a task for you, Nix-nought-nothing: 170

Bare is my byre
To winds and weathers;
Its rafters bare,
For you to thatch
With brightest feathers
From birds of the air.
I give you a day,
Till set of sun:
Go or stay,
But it must be done.

180

*[He points out to the R., and NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING
looks that way too.]*

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. And if I cannot do it?

WIZARD. Your skin shall thatch the byre, and your bones shall be the thatch-pegs.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*in horror*]. No!

WIZARD. But I say yes.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*desperately*]. But how shall I get the feathers?

WIZARD. Bow and arrows
To shoot the sparrows:
Linnnet and lark,
Follow and mark:
Cuckoo and jay,
Feathers all gay:
Magpie and crow
Wherever they go:
Blackbirds and thrushes
Out of the tree,
Hérons and eagles,—
Come with me!

190

[*The WIZARD goes out, R., NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING following him despairingly. For a moment MARY looks after them, then she speaks.*]

MARY. Father, father, how can I stay you,
How can I heed you, how obey you?
How can I bear to know or see
The death of one who has looked at me
With eyes as bright
And with glance as light
As the brushing wings of the midsummer bee?
I know my hour,
I know my power,
I see my way and I see it clearly:
Nix-nought-nothing, I love you dearly!

200

210

[NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING comes back with a bow and quiver of arrows; he holds the bow drawn ready by his cheek and looks from R. to L.]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. A bird at last!

[He shoots upwards and to the L., then runs out after his arrow.]

MARY. Nix-nought-nothing, my love, my dear,
Ask me to help you, I am near!

[NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING comes back with a bird in his hand, and again stands in the centre of the stage with his bow ready, looking about him.]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Ah, there again!

[He shoots to the right and runs out.]

MARY. Nix-nought-nothing, be wise, be true,
See where your Mary waits for you!

[He comes in again with another bird, then suddenly drops both birds and bow, and covers his face miserably with his hands.]

MARY. What is the matter, King's son?

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Your father has bidden me
thatch the whole great byre with feathers before sun-
set: if I have not done it, I die, but all the way I've 220
got now is to shoot two sparrows!

MARY. I can help you, King's son.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. You! But your father said—he
said you were as powerless as you are beautiful.

MARY. Lie down and sleep, King's son, and when you
wake the byre shall be thatched and no two feathers
on it alike.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING

267

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*moving towards her, and the bench*].

Oh Mary, Mary,
Your eyes are kind
As the lit, warm rooms
That children find
On a late returning.
Your voice is sweet
As the winter apples
That children eat
For their sleepy suppers.
My eyes shut fast
Where your hands are making
A sleep about me
That will end at last
As a child awaking
On a sunny morning.

230

240

[He lies down heavily on the bench with one hand stretched out as if to hold' hers; but she goes past him, smiling, to the centre of the stage, and there stands to say her spell.]

MARY. Nix-nought-nothing, sleep sound, sleep sound!

The byre shall be thatched,
My father outmatched,
And out of the woodlands all around
I call for the birds! [*She looks up, raising her arms.*
Oh birds, oh birds,
I am the wizard's daughter,
So listen to my words:
From air and from water,
From bush and heath and sedge,
From cliffs above the waves,
From tangles in the hedge,
From eaves and sunny caves,

250

From reedy river beds,
From oaken boughs that sway,
Listen and lift your heads,
Shake out your drowsy wings,
Faster than speech can say 260
Follow and flee,
Oh every bird that sings,
Listen to me!
Birds, birds, you that love me,
Hovering, quivering wings above me,
Swifts will not stay, hawks will not tire,
Go and thatch me my father's byre!
Feather of each
Give when I beg it,
Thatch it and peg it! 270
All to be done
By set of sun,
Quick, away, be it well begun!

[She makes a great sweeping movement, upwards and outwards with her hands, and the curtain falls.]

SCENE III. *The same as the last.*

[NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING is still asleep, with his bow and arrows beside him on the ground. He wakes and looks about him.]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Sunset!—Oh, was it true,
That fear, that striving?
Mary, yes, it was you,
You who made sleep a stream
For me to dive in.
What was it then, your fair
And strange contriving? 280

No dream, I say, no dream!
Words cast on the blue air,
Birds to the byre! [*He stares out to the R.*
Ah, how those roof-slopes gleam,
Feathers as gay and deep
As my soft, dream-filled sleep,
Flowers and fire!

Now the WIZARD comes in, L.

WIZARD. Well, Nix-nought-nothing, how has your task gone?

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*pointing*]. There is the byre 290
thatched.

WIZARD [*angrily*]. Who did this for you?

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. A bird with blue feathers.

WIZARD. A pretty sort of bird indeed! Well, I have
another task for you. [*He points down, and to the front.*

That lake is brimming
With waters deep
And fishes swimming.
But on its bottom
I would pasture sheep
And sow brown wheat
And a road would make
Between hedges sweet.
Drain me the lake!
I give you a day,
Till set of sun:
Go or stay,
But it must be done.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. But if I fail?

WIZARD. The fishes shall eat your flesh, and water 310
weeds shall twine about your bones.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. But how shall I drain this great
lake?

WIZARD. A sieve and a dish
To take the drink
From the thirsty fish.
Stand on the brink,
The fish will see:
All uncaring,
Glassily staring: 320
Come with me!

[He goes out, R., NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING following him. Then MARY comes in, L.]

MARY. When I am singing
There's one to hear me;
I am not lonely
When he is near me.
The rain comes stinging—
I run to meet it—
Or storm-wind leaping;
I dare all magic
Now love is keeping 330
Me undefeated!

[NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING comes back with the dish, and sees her.]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Mary, I have to drain your
father's lake by sunset, and all I have to do it with is a
dish and a sieve!

MARY. Sleep again, Nix-nought-nothing, and I will drain you the lake.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. I trust you, Mary, and I will sleep.

[He lies down on the bench and goes to sleep. She kneels at the front of the stage, looking intently downwards, and reaching down her white palms as if to the brink of the lake.]

MARY. Oh fish, oh fish,

I am the wizard's daughter,

340

So give me my wish:

Out of the world of weeds and water,

Twining, shining, slithering stalks,

Dark green buds of the water-lily

Under the water-spider's walks,

Softest slime where the bright and chilly

Eels go turning, with great tails churning

Rotted leaves into floating scum,

Out of the glistening deeps, oh listening

Thousands—myriads—fishes, come!

350

Fish, fish, you that know me,

Dimly shimmering fins below me,

Thirsty throats that no draught can slake,

Go and drain me my father's lake!

Goggle-eyes, off,

Make no long stop of it,

Drink every drop of it!

All to be done

By set of sun,

Quick, away, be it well begun!

360

[She makes a great sweep with her hands, outwards and downwards, and the curtain falls.]

SCENE IV. *The same.*

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING *is still asleep. MARY comes in, R., and wakes him.*

MARY. Nix-nought-nothing, awake, awake!

Drained and dry is my father's lake.

[He wakes and catches her by the hand.]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Mary! You have saved my life a second time.

MARY. But this is not all. My father will ask you what reward you wish for these tasks you have done. And how will you answer?

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. You know I will ask him for his daughter.

MARY. Then listen well to me! He will change me into 370
an apple and bid you choose me out of a silver dish of apples, all alike. But this way you shall know me. I will take my knife, quickly and secretly, and make deep cuts on my feet and hands, and you will see that one apple alone is scored and bruised.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. But, Mary——

MARY. I would do more than that for you, Nix-nought-nothing.

[The WIZARD comes in, L., and looks first to the front, at the lake, then at the two standing close together.]

WIZARD. Well, Nix-nought-nothing, my lake is drained:
but who did it for 'you?

380

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. A fish with blue fins.

WIZARD. A pretty sort of fish indeed! But you shall have your reward, my princeling: ask what you will of me.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. I ask for your daughter Mary.

WIZARD. I will prepare her to be your wife; come with me, daughter.

[*They go out, R. NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING paces up and down, waiting for the next trial.*]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. What are you doing, my lamb, my dear,

In the wizard's house with your love not near?

Is it the knife, my bird that's flown?

390

What are you doing, alone, alone? . . .

Will it end at last, our trouble and pain,

Shall I see some morning my home again?

Will the young men shout as they see us ride,

You, all day, a star at my side,

Will the sweet light dawn on my father's lawn

With my mother kissing the bride?

[*The WIZARD comes back, carrying a great silver bowl of apples.*]

WIZARD. Apples are magic.

The lovely trees in May

Are more alive than people.

400

With autumn's ageing,

The apples' peering faces

Stare at one through the branches,

Like old men, calmly.

Of these apples, one

Holds fast your love.

Choose and then break it

Upon the ground:

If you choose rightly,

Appears at once your bride.

410

[*He holds out the bowl to NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING, who picks up one apple after another, looking at them closely.*]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Oh Mary, can you hear me?

Do you lie

Folded and tiny in an apple's core?

Which are you? Which? Oh you, so dear, so nigh!

Whisper—my name. The softest, faintest sigh

My mazèd heart would treasure and adore! . . .

Apples . . . smooth apples . . . from an orchard floor

Of silky grass-glades . . . two and three and four,

Sweet magic apples . . . five . . . I put you by . . .

Oh, here's an apple with the knife's white score

Streaking its rosy skin! I choose and cry

42c

Mary!

[He throws the apple with all his force on to the ground just at the join of the curtains at the back, and, as it splits, MARY appears, and the scene ends.]

SCENE V. *The same, but dark.*

[If possible, this should be played with the curtains just looped back, and MARY and NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING close together, with one candle between them.]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Have you found it, Mary,
Your father's magic ring?

MARY. It is here! Without it,
He will have only the power
Of a mortal man.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. And now, now, we must fly
From the magic house, the terrible power of magic,
Back to green fields and gardens,
Green hedges . . .
My father's kingdom.

430

SCENE VI. *A Forest at Night.*

[A great pine bough might be hung or stretched across the curtain at the back. At one side there is a big pine log lying fallen. NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING and MARY are clinging together, looking from side to side. He has his sword drawn in his right hand, and his other arm round MARY.]

MARY. My father's footsteps! Oh, he has found us!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. We shall escape with the dark all round us.

MARY. He is coming, following, oh, he can hear you!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Courage, my heart, he will not come near you.

MARY. What can we do? Oh, where can we hide?

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. I have my good sword here by my side!

MARY. Oh love, this terrible, wild alarm!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. My arm is strong as your father's arm.

MARY. Oh, he is coming, quick, he is here!

440

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. He is only a mortal now, my dear!

[He steps back a pace towards the log, where MARY stays, crouching and trembling, while he stands in front of her with his sword ready to meet the WIZARD, who comes in R., terribly, with his dark robes swinging behind him, and in his right hand, too, a long, thin, shining-sharp sword.]

WIZARD. You took my daughter,
Who stole my magic:

You thought to fly!
Now I have caught her,
In life-long sorrow
She yet shall lie,
Fast bound for ever
In a tree-trunk hollow!
Oh foolish Mary,
To leave your garden:
Shall dawn no morrow
Your bonds to sever!
And hush your cry,
For I will not pardon!
And you, rash thief,
Who would dare so high,
You, Nix-nought-nothing,
In pain and terror
Past all belief,
In fear and horror,
Prepare to die!

450

460

[MARY *waits trembling and clinging to the log, but*
NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING *stands firm.*

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. I have your magic,
I have your Mary,
I know your power
Is spent and ended,
Your spells are dumb!
Oh, man, be wary
And well defended,
Whose short last hour
Is surely come!

470

[*They fight. Suddenly MARY starts to her feet and*

*comes forward, raising her hand with the magic ring
against her father.*

MARY. My father's magic—
Turn on him now!
Before his anger
I will not bow!
Loosen the cord
That ties his sandal!
Soften his sword
To a melting candle!
Tug at his cloak!
Hands at his throat
Tighten and choke,
Teeth like a stoat,
Fangs like a snake,
Poison and tear
Within and without him!
Powers of air
Follow and make
Darkness about him!

480

*[NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING wounds and disarms the
WIZARD, who falls to the ground.]*

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. I have you, Wizard!

490

WIZARD. Nix-nought-nothing,
Your sword went through me:
My power ends
With my ebbing heart's blood.
You will tell your friends
How well you slew me! . . .
There'll be no sighing,
There's none that grieves
For my pain in dying.

Alone in the forest,
The birds will strew me
With withered leaves.

500

[MARY comes nearer pitifully and stoops over her father. Suddenly he seizes her hand with the ring on it. She screams.

MARY. The ring! [*But he speaks before NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING can pull him away.*]

WIZARD. Dying, I put a spell on you of sorrow and forgetting: and my curse on the stealers of the ring!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*tearing his hand away from the ring*].

You shall not! You shall not! Ah . . . he is dead.

[*The WIZARD dies. The other two stare at one another across his body.*

MARY. Oh, Nix-nought-nothing, surely our troubles are over now!

510

[*But he stares at her ever more blankly, one hand up at his forehead.*

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Who are you, maiden?

MARY. Oh, not the curse so quickly! Dear, I am your Mary!

1

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*shaking his head*]. I have never seen you before.

SCENE VII. *The Kitchen at the Palace of the King of Strand-on-the-Green.*

[*A kitchen table, rolling-pin and board, largely labelled jam jars and honey pots, a copy of 'Mrs. Beeton', and so on. Perhaps a row of frying-pans hung up behind would look well. MARY stands at the table. She wears an old brown smock to hide*

her necklaces and embroidered dress, and an old check handkerchief to hide her yellow hair and veil her blue eyes. She mixes the dough, chanting over it, with a rolling-pin for he wand.]

MARY. White Magic in the flour,
Yellow Magic in the butter,
Almonds, honey, cream and yeast,
Heave and mingle, sweet and sour,
Froth and bubble, make your mutter
‘Wizard’s daughter, we obey you!’
Kitchen Magics, hear, I pray you!
Now in oven let me lay you,
Cakes to crown a kingly feast.

520

[Now enters the HEAD COOK, R., in one hand a saucepan, with which he gesticulates and emphasizes his points, especially in verse.]

HEAD COOK. Good-morning, kitchen-maid!

MARY *[bobbing]*. Good-morning, your gracious head-cookship!

COOK *[taking an attitude]*. To what I am saying pray
listen with care,
Hands at sides, toes turned out, above all, do not
stare!

Nix-nought-nothing, our gracious, most well-beloved
prince,

530

Who returned from his wanderings not so long since,
Will be married next week with a person no less
Than the Hoch-Wohl-Geborne, the eldest Princess
Of our neighbours in Flatland. Of course you will see
That the wedding depends almost wholly on me.
For the feast must surpass in its splendour and store
Any feast that has ever been heard of before,

With dishes so delicate, rare, and refined
As could only occur to my own master mind!
Now you, my good girl (and I cannot think why) 540
Have a hand for light pastry, in puff or in pie,
So my tartlets to you I entrust—not the least
Of the finishing touches that garnish the feast!

MARY. Thank you kindly, sir, I'll do my best.
[*But she puts her apron up to her eyes.*]

COOK. Why, what's the matter, my girl?

MARY. Oh please—please, what is the princess like, the
princess he is going to marry? {

COOK. What, the lovely, the beautiful foreign princess?
Her refinement, her charm, I can scarcely express!
Her cheeks are like jellies, a dumpling her chin, 550
Like smooth almond paste is her highness's skin!
Her eyes are small tartlets of black currant jam,
Brazil nuts her teeth, and her lips bright as ham,
Her hair crisp and brown as a saddle of lamb!
Her hands white as halibut, delicate, fine
As the taste of a trifle just soaked with white wine!
Her feet are so light, she could trip, it would seem,
Dry-shod on a lake made of chocolate cream,
While glow like fruit salads the jewels, the dress,
Of the ever-inspiring, foreign princess! 560

MARY. How—how beautiful she sounds!

COOK. Does she not! But of course, my dear girl, I have
not so far actually seen her.

MARY. Oh! Then perhaps, when you do see her—

COOK. I feel certain that, when the happy moment
arrives, the princess will do justice to my description.

[*The QUEEN comes in, L. The HEAD COOK bows, and MARY drops a curtsy.*

QUEEN. Oh dear, what did I come for? Oh yes, to be sure! His royal highness, Nix-nought-nothing, expressed a preference for ducks' eggs for his breakfast—green ones, you know. 570

COOK. The lightest word your Majesty shall say—
Our loyal ducks will hear it and obey!

QUEEN. Oh yes, quite, and I wanted to talk over the Wedding Feast with you. I think, perhaps, in view of the importance of the occasion, the Throne Room would be more suitable?

COOK [*with a lyric wave of the saucepan*]. The Throne Room clearly! Since I prop the throne,
As in a mutton chop its central bone,
Tender and strong, exists for it alone! 580

QUEEN [*a little faintly*]. Oh, quite! [They go out, L.]

MARY. Oh, my dear, that I love so well,
How can I break my father's spell?
Could you but hear me sadly sigh
What is the charm you can know me by?
Now you are prince and beyond my reach,
How can I hope to find or teach
Your heart forgetting, in magic stayed,
I, who am only a kitchen-maid?
[The HEAD COOK re-enters hurriedly, L. MARY looks round, startled.]

COOK [*with importance*]. Ah, I must hurry, must never 590
be late

On any account at a Council of State!

What eyes, my girl! But you well may look:
The King has asked for the cookery book!
 And you must most gravely consider your part
 Of the wedding feast—in your deepest heart
 Cherish the thought of each royal tart!

[He finds 'Mrs. Beeton' on the table, and hurries out again, L.]

MARY *[bitterly]*. So this is the end of my magic power,
 The wizard's garden, the fairies' hour!
 Nix-nought-nothing, oh, far away:
 The kitchen for me on your wedding day! 600
[She stays looking down at the table and the half-mixed dough, then suddenly looks up.]
 And yet—perhaps—do I see a light,
 Is this the road through sorrow and night?
 Oh birds, oh fishes, oh apple split,
 Do you point my path towards ending it?
 Oh my love, will you know the sign
 When you are eating those tarts of mine?
 Will you remember, quick or slow?
 Only a week until I know!
 Oh my dear—if I find the way—
 Only a week till your wedding day! 610

SCENE VIII. *The Banqueting Hall of the Palace.*

[A fairly long table, with the KING sitting behind it immediately in the middle; on his right, the QUEEN; next to her, round the corner of the table and sideways to the audience, the COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. On the KING's left, the FOREIGN PRINCESS, and on her left again, and opposite the COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. This is the High Table; the rest of the feast is happening off the stage.]

There should be as much gorgeousness as possible about this scene. Thick strips of tinsel, particularly the gold and copper sort, looped and hung against the back curtain and over the table among the dishes and candles; a few bright flowers strewn about the table and floor; a piece of coloured brocade—a curtain perhaps—corner-wise as a table-cloth. The solid part of the feast is over, but there are still large heaped dishes of cakes and fruit. Grapes and pineapples always look particularly magnificent. Every one should be robed as formally as possible. The FOREIGN PRINCESS should if possible be beautiful, though darker than MARY, but need not be intelligent. She wears white and gold, and a veil over her hair, held in place by a crown of flowers; she does not move much nor look anywhere but in front of her. The KING and QUEEN are both very gay, and NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING is gay too by moments, but then again sad and puzzled. He leans an arm on the table, pulling at the fruit in front of him. All are eating, but rather from greed than hunger.

This would be a very good moment for any of the cast's friends or relations who want to sing or dance. A home-made ballet, or part-songs, rounds and catches best of all, would be delightful, but the singers or dancers must remember that space (as well as time) is limited, and the table cannot be pushed right to the back of the stage, as then the actors, who are really more important, will not be able to be heard.

KING. Well, everything has gone very happily so far. [To the PRINCESS.] You look charming, my dear! [To the QUEEN.] And so do you! Six months ago we should never have believed this could happen.

QUEEN. After that dreadful wizard stole away our poor boy!

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. But how magnificently our Prince

revenged himself on the wicked man! What an example to all of us!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*shaking his head, troubled*]. I can 620
remember so little.

KING. But now we shall all live merrily,
Yes, and for ever after!
The prince who marries the princess—
Everywhere song and laughter,
Hall and parlour and kitchen
Happy from floor to rafter!

QUEEN. Children dance in the woodlands
In and out of the shadows,
Milkmaids dance round the may-poles, 630
Shepherds pipe in the meadows,
Swords are turned into ploughshares—

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Oh not that, your Majesty, I beg
of you! Leave us our swords!

[*The HEAD COOK comes in proudly, R., carrying an enormous tray covered with small dishes of sweets and cakes, among them MARY's little tarts. He offers them to all, from the front, leaning sideways over the table.*]

COOK. Your Majesties—Highnesses—deign to partake:
A biscuit—a jelly—a tartlet—a cake!
Compounded of spice
And of everything nice,
The delicate pastry will crumble and flake
And melt in your mouth 640
Like a breeze from the south!
Observe with what crispness a biscuit can break—
[NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING *chooses one of MARY's little tarts.*]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING

285

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF [*to COOK*]. I beg you, be calm,
since you merely distress

The Pride-of-the-Army, our lovely Princess!

Your foolish excitement is nothing but waste,

Since *my* conversation is more to her taste!

[*In the meantime NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING is eating the tart. He finds something hidden it it.*]

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. What is this? A feather!

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF [*pointedly*]. How very careless!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Oh no, oh no,

A feather . . .

650

Oh, was I awake then or only dreaming?

Did I see fire and snow

Piling together?

Was it a rainbow there, a great rainbow gleaming?

Or birds' feathers there,

High, high, up in air,

Oh, look, higher!

Clear it is, plain to see,

Roof-beams and cross-tree,

Birds thatch the byre! . . .

660

Then, was it waking or dream?

Real now, true it would seem,

But, if life hold it yet,

How—how—could I forget?

QUEEN [*anxiously*]. My dear! I am afraid you must be
feeling ill!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. No, no, it 'was nothing.

[*Absently, he takes another tart and bites into it.*]

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Superbly dreamt, my prince!

Now, I remember

A dream I had—a battle—last-November!

670

My charger pranced! My men stood armed and steady—

My plans prepared—my cannon loaded ready!

But just as we were full in act to fall

Upon the foe, I found my cannon all

Loaded with sausages!

COOK [*with a certain bitterness*]. And I dreamt last night that I was making a pudding—oh such a succulent and delicious pudding! And just as I was dishing it up, what did it do but turn into one of your disgusting cannon balls!

680

[NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING *has eaten the tart, and again finds something hidden in it.*

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Oh, what is this shining thing?

A fish's fin!

COOK. Impossible!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Look! In my hand

A fish's fin . . .

Oh it comes back, comes back, my dream again!

Who on that bank could stand,

Who, gazing in,

Could call the fish, her father's lake to drain? . . .

Fishes hurrying, circling near,

690

Gliding, sliding, in waters clear . . .

And this—this too was part!

He held, all sharp, my host—

I can remember almost—

A knife at my heart!

Then, did I dream or wake?

She, on the brink of the lake—

Oh, if life holds her yet,

How—how could I forget?

KING [*very anxiously*]. My dear boy, do please try not to 700
remember these dreams of yours just at the moment!

COOK [*nervous*]. Try a little fruit, your highness!

[NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING *puts his hand into the bowl
of fruit and takes out an apple, which splits into two in
his hand.*

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. The split apple!

QUEEN. How very awkward that these things should
have happened at your wedding!

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF [*coldly, with an eye on the cook*].
Most unfortunate!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*standing, happily, with the apple in
his hand*]. This is the split apple. She will be
coming now,

Mary, Mary, creeping like a small brown mouse 710
Across the forest, hiding, between bracken and bough,
Away from the power of magic, her father's lonely
house.

How did I come to lose you, Mary, my Mary,
Where have you gone, leaving me all astray?
In what wild hills do you go, fleeting and airy?
Where have you been all these months? Where are
you to-day?

[*He stands there with his arms out, and at last the
FOREIGN PRINCESS rises and speaks indignantly.*

PRINCESS. Who is this Mary?

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*crying out*]. 'Where is she?

KING [*furiously*]. Who is she?

QUEEN [*tearfully*]. Why is she? 720

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF [*cleverly*]. When was she?

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*suddenly*]. Who baked those tarts?

COOK. Please your highness, not me!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. I know that! Who was it?

COOK. I—I think it may have been the new kitchen-maid.

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Send for her!

[*The COOK rushes out precipitately, R. NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING is now standing in front, clear of the table.*

PRINCESS [*rising too*]. I will not stay here!

QUEEN [*trying to calm her*]. I feel sure, my dear, this will turn out to be nothing—a mere wild-geese chase! 730

PRINCESS. I do not like wild geese.

[*Re-enter the COOK, R., with MARY beside him; she stands, looking across the stage at NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING.*

COOK. Actually—she was listening behind the door!

MARY. Do you remember me,

Is it well, is it well,

Oh, love, do you know me?

Have I broken my father's spell?

Reach out your hand and show me!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING. Mary, oh, found again.

My dear, my dear, it is you!

Oh, well I know you! 740

To-day my dreams come true,

This is my hour to show you!

[*They move towards one another, take hands and kiss.*

QUEEN [*to COOK*]. Who is this girl? Where did she come from?

COOK [*trembling*]. Indeed, your Majesty—please your Majesty——

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*turning to the table*]. Here is my true bride!

KING. That kitchen slut!

[*MARY unties the handkerchief from her head, steps clear of her old smock, and appears before them in all her beauty.*]

MARY. I am the wizard's daughter,

750

Look at my ring!

Mistress of air and water,

And all white magics that spring

From bees and flowers and cornfields,

And sunshine in the morning,

And every common thing.

Now after sorrow and pain

And a long, long waiting,

I come at last to my mating,

Back to my love again:

760

Look well at my ring!

[*They all stare at her and the ring. By-and-by the*

KING *speaks, rather bewildered.*]

KING. She seems a most intelligent lady.

QUEEN. And beautiful.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF. Most certainly!

PRINCESS. I will go!

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING [*standing with MARY's hand in his*].

Oh, father dear, oh, mother dear,

I bring a lovely guest;

For your princess is the finest maid
Between the east and the west,
But there is one I'd rather have 770
Than her and all the rest:
For my lass,
The shy lass,
Is the lass I love best!

Out of the clouds, the wheeling birds,
For feathers she besought,
For our love's sake to drain the lake
The thirsty fish she taught,
And with her skill she bought my life,
Oh, dearer than we thought! 780
But here lass,
My dear lass,
Is the heart that you bought!
And oh, princess, and oh, princess,
Take back your marriage fee,
Oh, make you bold with gems and gold,
With all our treasure's key:
Gift of a king your wedding ring,
So mine it shall not be:
For you, lass, 790
My true lass,
Are the one lass for me!

[MARY *speaks straight at the audience.*]

MARY. This has been bitter
That now is sweet:
That now is sweeter
Than buds in April,
Than hives of honey,
Than fields of bean,

NIX-NOUGHT-NOTHING

291

Than all the hedges
Of Strand-on-the-Green.

800

Time will not hasten
His limping feet
To spoil the tasting
Of a thing so sweet!

GLOSSARIAL NOTES

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC (pp. 1-16).

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| <p>line 3. <i>goffe</i>, given.
 4. <i>lyvelod</i>, livelihood.
 5. <i>heyly</i>, highly.
 10. <i>her</i>, here.
 12. <i>wone</i>, dwell.
 13. <i>i-wysse</i>, certainly.
 18. <i>schereys me</i>, cheers me.
 20. <i>dessece</i>, dis-ease, uneasiness.
 20. <i>fell</i>, feel.
 24. <i>frey</i>, alarm.
 29. <i>prest</i>, ready.
 34. <i>medyll-erth</i>, the world.
 52. <i>best</i>, beast.
 66. <i>hest</i>, behest.
 68. <i>sond</i>, messenger.
 70. <i>lyt</i>, yet.
 78. <i>conseons</i>, conscience.
 78. <i>strongly steryd</i>, strongly stirred.
 80. <i>groche</i>, grudge.
 85. <i>my Lordes lore</i>, my Lord's bidding.
 98. <i>I wyll not lett</i>, I will not refrain.
 99. <i>fett</i>, fetch.
 102. <i>wer</i>, where.
 106. <i>barn</i>, child.
 121. <i>to-wond</i>, an intensive form of 'wound.'
 131. <i>make redy bon</i>, to prepare oneself.
 138. <i>quewe</i>, living.
 143. <i>I the red</i>, I counsel you.
 151. <i>I am woo</i>, I am sorrowful.
 153. <i>or that ye ces</i>, before you cease.
 155. <i>pes</i>, peace.
 161. <i>let me that wyt</i>, let me know.
 165. <i>hydygth</i>, hide.</p> | <p>170. <i>a yard</i>, a stick.
 171. <i>nogth</i>, not.
 174. <i>chese</i>, choose.
 178. <i>sythyn</i>, since.
 179. <i>schonge your chere</i>, change your looks.
 181. <i>but gyf</i>, unless.
 192. <i>mygth a</i>, might have.
 193. <i>had a be hys plecter</i>, had been His pleasure.
 198. <i>on or too</i>, one or two.
 200. <i>make ye no woo</i>, do not grieve.
 219. <i>for wyll</i>, farewell.
 227. <i>a wylle</i>, awhile.
 246. <i>let</i>, hinder.
 250. <i>for the</i>, before thee.
 231. <i>to dey</i>, to die.
 253. <i>do on youre lyst</i>, do your pleasure.
 256. <i>no dell</i>, in no degree.
 257. <i>wost</i>, knew.
 262. <i>gret</i>, cry.
 263. <i>thow dystempurst me</i>, you agitate me.
 266. <i>did meue yow</i>, did vex you with.
 278. <i>me stede</i>, set myself.
 285. <i>kerche</i>, kerchief.
 299. <i>reysyth The ageyn</i>, rises against Thee.
 309. <i>schorte me of my woo</i>, shorten my sufferings.
 312. <i>onmyld</i>, unmild, i.e. rebellious.
 313. <i>let for the</i>, hesitate for thy sake.
 313. <i>hoold tha stroke</i>, bear that stroke.
 316. <i>blythe</i>, quickly.</p> |
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318. *an-C-sythe*, an hundred times.
 322. *sum of thy hevynes for to departe*, to remove some of your sorrow.
 323. *gan brynge*, did bring.
 331. *gayn*, straight.
 332. *fre*, noble.
 334. *yeyed*, eased.
 341. *be*, by.
 350. *harly*, surely.
 351. *yn*, yon.
 354. *worthschup*, worship.
 356. *hent*, seize.
 376. *brene a full good shyd*, burn up quickly.
 377. *wyll*, while.
380. *my mornnyng is past*, my mourning is over.
 381. *gled*, burning coal.
 390. *the by*, beside thee.
 392. *youres botheres*, both your.
 398. *frowte gret won*, one great fruit.
 399. *yynd*, end.
 401. *everyschan*, every one.
 404. *be thys warke*, by this work.
 411. *derewordy*, precious.
 412. *now have I red*, now I realize.
 428. *avoe*, avow.
 434. *all thow that we be holdyng to*, all those to whom we are beholden.

EVERTMAN (pp. 17-37)

- line 3. *by figure*, in form.
 4. *somonyng*, summoning.
 6. *all daye*, always.
 19. *heven kyng*, heavenly king.
 25. *ghostly*, spiritual.
 29. *appayreth*, becomes worse.
 45. *renne*, run.
 50. *to departe*, to separate.
 61. *wete*, know.
 68. *sphere*, sphere.
 69. *or*, ere.
 74. *layser*, leisure.
 78. *boke of counte*, account book.
 85. *attournay*, return.
 89. *rest*, arrest.
 94. *good*, possessions.
 98. *set not*, set no store by.
 100. *and*, if (so *passim*).
 105. *I may saye*, I may well say.
 106. *seke*, sick.
 114. *hast thee*, hasten thee.
 115. *preve*, test.
 116. *tyde*, time.
 129. *of myn acquente*, of my acquaintance.
130. *hardy*, brave.
 132. *that thou were gone*, that thou mayest be gone.
 134. *wenest thou*, thinkest thou.
 141. *made*, mad.
 148. *advysment*, counsel, warning.
 162. *be gete*, been begotten.
 165. *that all wroughte*, who created all things.
 172. *affyaunce*, confidence.
 183. *Ye*, yea.
 190. *Pyle*, pity.
 194. *gramercy*, many thanks.
 197. *breke*, reveal.
 217. *a straye counte*, a strict account.
 218. *Adonay*, Adonai, Heb. *Adon*, lord.
 228. *quycke ne deed*, alive or dead.
 238. *bought*, redeemed.
 243. *parde*, par Dieu.
 246. *haunt to women the jocund company*, frequent the lusty company of women.
 256. *symple*, foolish.

263. *brynge*, escort, accompany.
 271. *betake*, commend.
 277. *A lady*, Ah, Lady.
 277. *ony more*, any more delay.
 289. *kynde*, kindred.
 315. *stere*, stir.
 318. *sholde come ryght well*, would be very timely.
 321. *Myssas*, Messiah.
 322. *And you do by me*, as you deal by me.
 323. *moon*, moan.
 326. *on you fall*, happened to you.
 337. *dampned*, damned.
 358. *stounde*, occasion.
 369. *borowe*, redeem.
 374. *hele*, soul's health.
 385. *hyght*, are called.
 393. *incontynent*, immediately.
 403. *Peas*, peace.
 406. *our alder spede*, the speed of us all.
 408. *than*, then.
 412. *set eche of you on this rodde his honde*, let each of you put his hand on this cross.
 430. *more and lesse*, great and small.
 431. *smoder*, be smothered.
 435. *crosse out*, make no account of.
 449. *brast*, break.
 460. *thyrst thee*, thrust thyself.
 461. *I had wende surer I sholde you have founde*, I had thought to find you more trustworthy.
 473. *ones*, once.
 513. *Shorte our ende and mynyshe our payne*, shorten our end and lessen our pain.
 518. *the fendes boost*, the Fiend's boast.
 520. *dome*, doom.

THE PLAT OF THE WETHER (pp. 38-72)

THE PLAYERS NAMES.

THE LAUNDER, the laundress.

the lest that can play, the smallest that can act.

line 6. *fale*, fall.

20. *hyenes*, highness, majesty.

53. *that . . . they have tryed*, that which they have experienced.

58. *arow*, in turn.

86. *for fyne*, to make an end.

94. *sorte*, assembly.

104. *perse*, i.e., *perse*, used in naming letters, A, I, O, which by themselves form words.

126. *sewer*, surely.

131. *or*, etc.

134. *what skyls*, what matters it whether.

fryse, frieze.

138. *merely*, merrily.

142. *swettyng*, sweetheart.

145. *departed*, separated.

154. *indyfferent*, impartial.

155. *affection*, motive.

176. *a fellyshyppe*, of your friendliness.

S.D. staf, stave, stanza.

182. *pretens*, proclaimed purpose.

187. *carterly keytyffs*, carterlike, boorish scoundrels.

198. *Lovyn*, Louvain.

204. *Typtre*, Tiptree in Essex.

208. *Wyllam*, Witham, in Essex.

211. *Ynge Gyngiang Jayberd*, the name of a manor at Stock, in Essex, where Heywood's brother, William, lived.

222. *meyry*, attendants.

234. *maship*, mastership.

241. *by and by*, immediately.

249. *sorte*, see l. 94.
 275. *journyng*, journeying, careering.
 277. *to-comfort the cry*, keenly cheer on the pack.
 292. *teyse and receyve*, chase and call off.
 296. *weale*, source of well-being.
 300. *of a lyttel whelpe*, since I was a small kid.
 313. *myster*, be needful.
 314. *glyster*, clyster, injection.
 329. *person*, parson.
 341. *by and by*, see l. 241.
 342. *hardely*, surely.
 357. *fraught*, carry as freight.
 368. *Berynge our seyls*, setting our sails.
 379. *selfe*, same.
 385. *Syn*, Chios.
 467. *never a dele*, not at all.
 472. *tasted*, spent.
 474. *of the grete wete . . . mater*, cause of the heavy rain.
 475. *leake*, leaky.
 508. *get*, i.e. jet, as in l. 510, strut about.
 518. *dawes*, fools.
 527. *gys*, Jesus.
 536. *fet*, feat, prim.
 537. *trycke*, smart.
 542. *hardely*, see l. 342.
 550. *ges*, guess.
 552. *symper de cokket*, smirking flirt.
 565. *breke*, break, disclose.
 566. *gyglet*, minx.
 573. *nycebyceters*, wantons.
 576. *queues*, queans, harridans.
 577. *thwart*, be at variance.
 585. *parels*, perils.
 601. *jeoberd*, put in jeopardy.
 607. *commodityte*, advantage.
 609. *sweeter*, sweeter.
 615. *the ton*, the one.
 616. *or*, ere, before.
 617. *fet*, fetch.
 633. *lyckly*, likely, suitable.
 636. *byb*, drink.
 649. *to myche*, too much.
 651. *spytell*, hospital.
 652. *no gere*, in no wise.
 fretynge, rubbing.
 667. *casweltees*, chance tips.
 673. *ryche*, rich persons.
 doth most accord, is most suitable.
 674. *pater noster*, said by the criminal before execution.
 675. *sens the shryfe wyth your helys*, swing incense before the sheriff with your heels, i.e. be hanged.
 687. *set in frame*, arrayed.
 703. *my lorde*, the dignitary in whose house *Wether* was performed.
 712. *purveyed*, provided, sent.
 722. *chept*, bargained for.
 727. *sorte*, see l. 94.
 737. *hole*, whole, well.
 739. *lyckly*, see l. 633.
 761. *desyreth*, desires.
 fleesys, fleeces, booty.
 781. *cooles to blow meanly*, soft winds to blow moderately.
 790. *to be sped*, to get what they want.
 795. *shrewed*, troublesome.
 810. *from temperaunce be deferd*, removed from moderation.
 816. *raught*, reached.
 826. *Are presyd*, have made haste.
 830. *peryshe*, destroy.
 834. *greuys*, griefs, grievances.
 842. *cooles*, see l. 781.
 858. *arow*, see l. 58.
 863. *hyer*, hire, obtain.
 865. *atempt*, entice.
 883. *ply*, apply, make use of.

885 *whole*, see 1 737.894 *sooll*, sole, solely.895 *holy*, wholly.904 *sauter*, psalter918 *apparauntly*, clearly919 *cost*, coast, region

A YORKSHIRE TRAGEDY (pp 73-101)

Scene I

line 14 'Slidd, a contraction of
God's eye lid18 *simply*, violently25 *hanged*, all hung about28 *rebate wres*, supports for the
rebato, a plaited ruff of the
period29 *cod pree*, the pouch in front of
the trunk hose38 *nunny-hammer*, simpleton49-50 *run upon the left hand of her*
wit, go out of her senses55, *stand in wax*, stand surety under
his seal60 *poing sticks*, sticks for setting
the folds of a ruff

62 'far fetched', cf 1 66

Scene II

91 *dejected*, reduced.98 *are*, that are105 *angels*, gold coins, varying in
value between 6s 8d and 10s122 *get*, beget126 *chaw*, chew128 *underputter*, a pander138 *by many bloods*, by long
descent174 *my blood*, my nature191 *God den*, good even210 *fond*, foolish

Scene III

311 *wise acres*, landed estate321 *so I made it*, so I made it ap-
pear371. *dankish*, dank, wet.

Scene IV

377 *howsoever*, notwithstanding378 *circumstance*, circumlocution385 *amazed*, confounded388 *towardest*, most promising389 *without*, in default of392 *profited*, if he had progressed416 *I begin to you*, I drink first to
you418 *the kind man*, the kinsman429 *confused*, ruined471 *vizards*, masks474 *your white boy*, your favourite
boy479-80 *follow*, 'Good your honour',
follow, saying 'Good your
honour' to a person in a coach

Scene V

491 *heaviness*, grief493 'Tis lost at dice what, that is
lost at dice which502-3 *The surest way*, &c An
allusion to the supposed murder
of Amy Robsart by the Earl of
Leicester528 'Sblood, a contraction of
'God's blood'

Scene VI

542 *resolve*, satisfy

Scene VII

580 *spoil*, mangle

Scene VIII

590 'sfoot, a contraction of 'God's
foot'

601. *deny me go*, deny me the power to go on.
 602. *bailed*, tormented.
 611. *on's*, of us
 617. *blazed*, blasoned, proclaimed

Scene IX

645. *to cozen*, to cheat.

647. *sad*, solemn.
 652. *worship*, dignity, especially of a magistrate.

Scene X

671. *still*, constantly.
 720. *S D. with halberds*, with his guards carrying halberds.

THE INNER TEMPLE MASQUE (pp. 102-17)

- line 11. *leave*, cease, *passim*.
 13. *mandrakes*, poisonous plants fabled to utter a shriek when pulled up
 26. *famoused*, renowned.
 33. *control*, overpower
 41. *the centre*, the middle of the earth.
 51. *Nereus' daughter*, one of the numerous daughters of the sea-god, Nereus
 66. *S D quaintly*, fantastically. *anadem*, a chaplet.
 76. *sylvans*, forest deities.
 81. *indifferent*, impartial
 83. *midway the wood*, midway between the wood.
 86. *get his inn*, reach his destination.
 96. *S D traverse*, curtain
Zeuxis, a Greek painter of Heraclea
taffety, taffeta, lustrous silk.
 107. *Ithacus*, man of Ithaca, i.e. Ulysses.
 119. *lumber*, pliant.

123. *coil*, tumult
 128. *moly*, a magic herb, antidote to enchantment.
 130. *jaspis*, jasper
 152. *tynd*, kindled
 155. *Laestragon*, one of the cannibal giants of the *Odyssey*, book X.
 177. *the thicks*, the thickets.
 180. *moe*, mow, make faces.
 186. *steers*, frightens
 189. *S D at a stand*, perplexed.
 223. *Laerthades*, son of Laertes, i.e. Ulysses himself
 246. *free*, blameless
 257. *Nerendes*, sea-nymphs, daughters of Nereus
 263. *S D presently*, immediately.
 278. *pyramis*, pyramid.
 283. *remain*, remnant.
 292. *S D. postures*, images.
antick, fanciful
artificially, ingeniously.
severally, separately.
 318. *S D galliards*, lively dances.
corantos, quick dances.
brawls, French dances.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY (pp. 118-50)

- line 10. *Royal Inniskillions*, the Royal Enniskillen (Inniskillings) or 6th dragoons, recruited in 1689 among the supporters of William III.

14. *Steven's Green*, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin.
 63. *spatterdash*, a sort of long garter worn by foot-soldiers.
 84. *Galen a-bridge*, abridgement

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| of Galen, the Greek medical writer.
89. <i>the bark</i> , quinine.
106. <i>circumvallation</i> , a wall surrounding a fortified place.
233. <i>all-fours</i> , a game of cards. | 420. <i>the Dragon of Wantly</i> , a fabulous monster of Yorkshire.
666. <i>unus quorum</i> , one of whom, i.e., one of the bench of magistrates.
757. <i>mandamus</i> , a writ issued by a higher court to a lower. |
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THE FALCON (pp. 151-75)

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| line 17. <i>Buss me</i> , kiss me.
314. <i>moraine</i> , a continuous line of rocks and gravel along the edge | of a glacier.
489. <i>ghittern</i> , a cithern, a kind of guitar. |
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RIDERS TO THE SEA (pp. 176-91)

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| line 56. <i>hooker</i> , a fishing smack.
92. <i>jobber</i> , middleman.
173. <i>poteen</i> , illicitly - distilled whisky. | 234. S.D. <i>to keen</i> , to make a wailing lamentation over the dead.
341. <i>Samhain</i> , All Saints' day, November 1st. |
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